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THE JEWISH SCHOOL



# THE JEWISH SCHOOL

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE  
HISTORY OF JEWISH EDUCATION

BY

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*To*  
MY WIFE  
WITH THANKS



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## GLOSSARY

### **Am-Ha-Arez.**

Literally, "Man of the Land." Talmudic term signifying an ignorant, untutored person.

### **Assyrian Alphabet.**

Talmudic name for the present form of the Hebrew alphabet. So called because it was supposedly introduced by the returning Babylonian captives after 536 B.C.E. It superseded the old Phoenician alphabet.

### **Bar-Kochba.**

Leader of Palestinian Jewry in their final struggle for freedom against the Romans. Killed at Bethar 135 C.E.

### **Bar Mitzvah.**

Literally, "Son of the Commandment." Term applied to a Jewish boy on attaining the age of thirteen. At Barmizvah he becomes responsible for the fulfilment of every Mitzvah or Commandment of the Torah.

### **B.C.E.**

Before Current Era. Initials employed by orthodox Jewish custom to signify years B.C.

### **Ben-Sira.**

(Ecclesiasticus.) Author of the apocryphal work "The Wisdom of Ben-Sira." Probably lived just before the Maccabean Era.

### **C.E.**

Current Era. Initials employed by orthodox Jews to signify years A.D.

### **Creeds.**

Thirteen articles by the Jewish faith formulated by Moses Maimonides (*q.v.*).

### **Ethics of the Fathers.**

A small tractate in Seder Nezikin containing ethical and moral aphorisms of the rabbis. Contains six chapters, of which the last is probably a post-Talmudic addition.

**Festivals.**

*Day of Atonement.* The climax of the Jewish penitential season which begins on the New Year. Occurs on the 10th day of Tishri and is kept as a Fast day.

*New Year.* The first two days of the seventh month (Tishri) are known as the "New Year." The term is Talmudic. The Bible only refers to the custom of blowing the Shofar.

*Passover.* First of the Three Pilgrim Feasts. Celebrates the miraculous deliverance of the Hebrews from Egyptian bondage; is also Feast of Unleavened Bread.

*Cf.* Exodus xii. 1-51; Exodus xiii. 3-10; Exodus xiii. 14-19; Lev. xxiii. 4-14; Num. xxviii. 16-25; Deut. xvi. 1-8.

*Pentecost* (Feast of Weeks). Second of the Three Pilgrim Feasts. Occurs exactly fifty days after the first day of Passover. Traditionally the anniversary of Sinaitic revelation. Also the biblical Harvest and First Fruit Festival.

*Cf.* Exodus xxxiv. 22; Lev. xxiii. 15-21; Num. xxviii. 26-31; Deut. xvi. 9-12.

*Tabernacles.* Third of the Three Pilgrim Feasts. The late harvest festival. On it Jews commemorate their desert wanderings by building booths and dwelling in them. *Cf.* Lev. xxiii. 39-43.

**Maccabees (Hasmoneans).**

Term applied to the family and descendants of Mattathias (died 166 B.C.E.), a Hasmonean priest who initiated the Jewish revolt against Antiochus Epiphanes, the Syrian Emperor. His most famous son and successor was Judah Maccabeus. Hence the name.

**Maimonides.**

Most famous of Jewish philosophers and codifiers. Wrote "Guide to the Perplexed" (a consideration of Judaism and Aristotelian philosophy) and "Mishneh Torah" (a codification of the whole body of Jewish Law). Born 1135 at Cordova, Spain; died 1205 at Cairo, Egypt.

**Megilloth.**

Term applied to the biblical books, Canticles, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther, which are publicly read on Passover, Pentecost, Fast of Ab, Tabernacles and Purim respectively.

**Midrash.**

Name given to the hermeneutical process whereby the Law was expounded. Such expositions—legalistic, homiletical and folkloristic—later coalesced into a body of literature called Midrash.

**Mishnah.**

The codification of the "Oral Law" (*q.v.*) made by Judah the Prince at the end of the second century c.E.

**Mishnaic Period.**

The period of the development of the "Oral Law." At its widest limits it extends from Ezra, 457 B.C.E., till Judah the Prince, *c.* 200 C.E.

**"Oral Law."**

That body of law which grew up side by side with the written law (Pentateuch) and which was formulated and transmitted orally.

**Pharisees.**

Jewish religious and political party which grew up in Palestine in time of second temple. So called from Lev. xx. 26. Insisted on Jewish "separateness" (Heb. PaRaS) and consecration. Pharisaism subsequently became synonymous with traditional or Rabbinic Judaism. Hence the additional derivation from PaRaS, to develop or interpret the Torah.

**Philo (Judæus).**

Jewish philosopher of Alexandria, Egypt. Born *c.* 20-10 B.C.E. Most important representative of Hellenistic Judaism.

**Rashi.**

Abbi Shlomo ben Isaac; b. 1040, died 1105. Best-known Jewish commentator on Bible and Talmud. His commentary is printed on the inner margin of most editions of the Babylonian Talmud.

**Sadducees.**

Jewish religious and political party in Palestine in time of second temple. Formed originally as an aristocratic or priestly party (after Zadok—a priestly family name), they became the conservative party, opposing the innovations in and interpretations of Jewish Law made by the Pharisees.

**Shema.**

Deut. vi. 4-9; xi. 13-21; and Num. xv. 37-41.

These three paragraphs are named after the first word in the Hebrew text and are the declaration of faith recited by Jews in the morning and evening prayers.

**Sopher.**

From Hebrew root SPHR. A man who wrote scrolls of the law and/or one who taught the Book of the Law (SePHeR Torah).

**Synhedrion.**

Supreme Jewish Legal and Religious Council. Existed in Talmudic times. Its president was called the *Nassi* or Prince.

**Talmud.**

Literally, "learning" or "knowledge"; indicates the work comprising the *Mishnah* (*q.v.*) plus the commentary on and exposition of the *Mishnah* known as the *GeMaRa*. Redacted 499 c.e.

**Talmudic Period.**

Properly the *Mishnaic* period plus the period from 200 c.e. till 499 c.e., but sometimes refers to the latter period only. See Appendix II.

**Targum.**

The renderings of Scripture into Aramaic, of which the most famous are those of *Onkelos* and of *Jonathan b. Uzziel*.

**Torah.**

Originally "The Five Books of Moses," but later the word was extended to include the whole of Jewish Law and Tradition.

## INTRODUCTION



## INTRODUCTION

I.—Jewish education is passed over in silence, or only incidentally referred to, in general educational literature. Examples from Monroe, Cubberley and Boyd. II.—The reasons for this attitude. III.—Jewish education is entitled to a place in the general story of education. The length of its history. The school as the largest single factor in Jewish life. The achievements of Jewish education in Palestine in modern times.

### I

THIS work is an effort at a systematic and critical study of the classical period in Jewish education. In it an attempt will be made to describe the form and content of the early Jewish school and its social and religious background. At the same time it will be shown that Jewish education did not develop in isolation from the general movement of educational thought and practice; but that its growth was affected by other systems, which, in their turn, were influenced by Jewish thought, even though indirectly.

The author realises the difficulty of the task he set himself, inasmuch as until now general educational literature has either entirely passed over in silence, or only incidentally referred to, Jewish education. Thus, for example, we find that Monroe's "Text-book in the History of Education" devotes 160 out of 760 pages to Greek and Roman education; 33 to Chinese education, which is regarded as typical of Oriental education in general; but not one line to either ancient or modern Jewish education.<sup>1</sup>

The two companion volumes by Cubberley contain between them over 1,500 pages, covering the whole range of the history of education from the days of ancient Greece down to most recent times. But the author does not con-

sider it necessary to give more than two pages to the history, religion and education of the Jews combined; and one other page to a collection of maxims from the Talmud. Even these scraps are obviously included not for their own sake, but by way of preliminary to the study of early Christian education.<sup>2</sup>

To take a final example, Dr. Boyd's "History of Western Education" contains a short chapter of ten pages on Jewish education. The Jewish school is regarded as merely an aspect of Greek education and is denied any claim to originality. Yet in spite of, or perhaps rather because of that, these few pages are amongst the most suggestive and stimulating to be found on the subject in general literature. It is, however, "a drop out of a bucket," which only serves to whet the appetite of the student. The reason for this treatment is not far to seek, for here, too, Jewish education is taken note of not because of any intrinsic merit it may possess, but mainly on account of "the influence of the Old Testament upon our ideas on the upbringing of children."<sup>3</sup>

This is typical of the attitude of historians in general. Jewish education, like Persian or Babylonian education, is regarded as a thing of the past. It may arouse a mild form of purely historic interest; at best it may throw some light on the development of early Christian education. It has little or nothing to teach the modern student.

## II

The author dares to express the hope that the following chapters may lead to some modification of attitude towards the Jewish school system. For the time being it will be sufficient to make a few preliminary remarks. The fact that Jewish education has so far received no attention is not by itself sufficient proof that it deserves none. There

are many reasons to explain why it is generally passed over in silence. The most important of these is of a purely technical nature. The material on the origin and early history of the Jewish school is scattered throughout the vast and not easily accessible rabbinical literature.

Again, in later ages Jewish education, like the community that brought it into being, lost its territorial, if not its spiritual, unity, and it became impossible to trace the history of the school without at the same time following the fortunes of the people in their almost endless wanderings. There is little wonder that historians shrank from such a task.

Another reason may be found in the curious fact that the Jews themselves showed very little interest in the history of their school—an institution which they never tired of eulogising. As a well-known scholar somewhat naïvely puts it: The Jews were so much preoccupied with the actual business of education that they found no time to write about it. The Talmud itself, in spite of the fact that it has something to tell us about every conceivable thing no matter how trifling it might appear, does not contain one complete page entirely devoted to education, its history, organisation, or methods. And at the present time we are still waiting for a history of Jewish education which should satisfy the demands of the modern student used to scientific methods. These circumstances alone seem quite sufficient to explain, and to a large extent even to excuse, the scanty attention given to the subject in general educational literature.

### III

However, the extent of its history should by itself entitle the Jewish school to a place in the story of education. It has a longer record of continuous existence than any school in Europe—probably in the world. Beginning somewhere

in the sixth century B.C.E., it has continued without a break down to the present day. It was the contemporary of the Greek, and saw the rise and decline of the Roman school. For a considerable period, from the fourth to the eighth century C.E., it was the only regularly functioning educational institution in a practically school-less world. It lived through the movements of the Renaissance and the Reformation, and was deeply affected by the educational developments brought about by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent democratisation of society.

Nor are the achievements of Jewish education of a negligible order. If formal education, or the school, may be described as the chief means by which a people seeks to preserve and advance its collective life, then the work of the Jewish school is wellnigh unique.

The survival of the Jew under conditions of unparalleled adversity is a riddle to some, a miracle to others. It is in reality neither. It is mainly the result of a successful system of education, extraordinarily adequate alike for the needs of the individual as of the community. Religion, economics, politics all played their part in the story of the Jew, but we shall never get to the heart of that story unless we realise that the school was the largest single factor in Jewish life, equal in importance to all the rest combined. In the absence of the usual attributes of national life—political independence, territorial segregation, even community of language—education became the focus of all the vital powers of the people, supplying the content as well as the form for its collective life. And it accomplished its task with a success to which history knows few parallels. Judaism in the widest sense—religion, the Bible and post-biblical literature, the Jewish way of life—all owe their preservation ultimately to the work of the school.

Nor is it all a story of the past. The remarkable achievements of Jewish education in Palestine during the past

half-century show that it has not yet lost either its vitality or its creative energy. It is one of the most daring and successful experiments in the history of education. Fifty years ago, although it was still a literary medium for educated Jews, Hebrew was nowhere a spoken language. There was not a man in the whole world who considered it his vernacular; there was not a teacher who knew how to use it for the teaching of a simple sum in arithmetic. Today it is the spoken language of the Jewish population in Palestine. There are many thousands of the young generation to whom it is the only medium of expression. It is, besides, along with English and Arabic, one of the recognised official languages of the country. Before our own eyes there has taken place the resurrection of a language and a literature and the development of a school system from the kindergarten to the university. It would be a mistake to regard this modern phase of Jewish education as a clean break with the past. It is rather to be considered the culmination of a system which, amidst all external changes, has succeeded in preserving an essential unity. And the foundations for that unity were laid in those early days, more than two thousand years ago, when education as a social institution first appeared on the stage of Jewish history.



PART I  
BEGINNINGS



## CHAPTER I

### THE RISE OF JEWISH EDUCATION

I.—The Jewish school came into being as the result of a long process of gradual growth. There is no mention of the school in the Bible; nor of regular formal education of children. Illustrations from the stories of biblical heroes. The practical training of the child. II.—Formal education in the Bible. The Paradise story. The priests, elders and judges. The idea of teaching and learning in the modern sense first appeared with the emergence of literary prophecy. III.—The circumstances leading up to the rise of the Synagogue. The priest and the prophet. The Babylonian captivity. The Synagogue as a school for adults; and as a means of indirect education for children. The early teachers. The Hellenistic period. Schools for youths. The Roman wars. The rise of the publicly organised and publicly controlled elementary school. Three stages in the development of the school.

## I

THE modern student hardly needs reminding that a school system, like any other social institution, does not spring into existence, out of nothing as it were, by the fiat of some authority. The Jewish popular school came into being as the result of a long process of gradual growth, the beginnings of which are lost in obscurity. Nor is this process to be thought of as a smooth, steady upward curve. Again and again it was either retarded or accelerated by the play of social, economic and political forces within and without the community. Yet it is possible to trace a fairly continuous line of development from the earliest ages, when formal education was an unknown thing, down to the time when the popular school became a fully established social institution.

Neither the Hebrew Bible, nor even the New Testament,

contains any mention of the elementary school. It seems quite safe to say that as a public institution such a school did not exist during the whole period covered by biblical literature.<sup>1\*</sup> In the latter part of that period it may be assumed that many children, especially boys, received some form of literary instruction. As a rule the father was the instructor, but sometimes private teachers, Jewish, and even non-Jewish, as will be shown later, were engaged for the purpose. Such individual teachers might set up "schools" of a sort in their own homes, or occasionally in some public place, after the manner of classical Athens.<sup>†</sup> These schools were the private affairs of their owners, and received no support from the community, nor were they subject to any control by it as far as the content and form of education were concerned. They were regarded by the law as any other trading concerns, and such was also the attitude to them of their neighbours, who, it would seem, did not always welcome them into their midst.<sup>2</sup> The publicly controlled elementary school for children did not come into being until after the period of the Bible.

But, quite apart from schools, the Bible hardly contains a reference to the regular education of children, if education is to be understood in its modern sense. There are indeed numerous injunctions about "telling," "relating to" and "teaching" children. These were interpreted by later generations as referring to formal elementary education which had then already become a recognised social institution. Thus the well-known verses in Deuteronomy, "and thou shalt teach them diligently to thy children," "and you shall teach them to your children,"

\* Notes are grouped under chapters at the end of the book.

† The school which Herod attended ("Ant.," 15-10-5) may be assumed to have been of this type, and its curriculum probably included secular as well as religious subjects.

were made the religious basis of Jewish elementary education, and are still regarded so by Jews.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly such verses in the story of the Exodus as "and thou shalt relate to thy son," or, "and it shall come to pass when thy son ask thee," serve as the foundation for the Passover-eve home service in which the child is assigned a central function.<sup>4</sup> But a careful examination will leave little, if any, doubt that these passages deal in a general way with the transmitting of tradition from generation to generation, and that such expressions as "children" or "sons" usually mean the "next generation" in general.<sup>5</sup>

It is significant that in the numerous stories of the biblical heroes and their early childhood we never find a mention of literary education as forming part of their upbringing. Thus, for instance, the story of Jacob and Esau. The children grew up, one becoming a hunter, the other a shepherd, occupations for which they were trained by actual participation in the life and work of the family, but no mention of any other form of education. And so also with Joseph. At seventeen he is a shepherd among his brothers, the ordinary primitive training which a child picks up by imitation, or is taught by the family, but there is no reference to any form of book learning, or even of regular moral and religious instruction. The same applies to Moses or David, or any of the other popular figures. People among whom these stories arose and circulated could hardly have reached such a conception as formal education for the young.

In the period following the Roman wars and the destruction of the second temple, when education became the main content of Jewish life, taking the place of the political institutions of which the people were deprived, the life stories of those early heroes were retold in accordance with the demands of the new situation. Shem, the eldest son of Noah, became in Jewish lore the founder of an academy

for the study of the Torah which counted among its students both Isaac and his son Jacob, who studied there for fourteen years and later on transmitted his knowledge to Joseph. Even David was made to spend his time in the "House of study" in discussions about details of ritual and ceremonial.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the practical training of the child, religious and social, is as old as the family itself. Indeed, the development of the family as a social institution was due to a large extent to the need for protecting the child and equipping him for the life that awaited him. As among other peoples so also among the Jews, this training was in the form of direct sharing in the activities of the family and through it in that of the community. Trades were hereditary in the whole of the ancient world, a practice which has not entirely died out even now. As to direct religious training, the Bible furnishes us with numerous examples. We read, for instance, of children going with their parents to the sanctuaries, or of mothers teaching their daughters lamentations for the dead.<sup>7</sup> A vivid illustration of practical religious training by direct participation may be found in Jeremiah: children collecting wood; the fathers kindling the fire; and the mothers kneading the dough to make cakes for the queen of heaven.<sup>8</sup>

The child occupies a prominent place in biblical literature. We see him in various rôles: as a victim of tribal warfare, or an object of the lawgiver's solicitude; we see him at work, we see him at play; but never do we find him engaged in study.

Literary education for children was uncommon during most of the biblical period; it began to claim recognition only when that period was drawing toward its close.

## II

The position of elementary education in Bible times will be more clearly understood when it is viewed in the wider context of the position of formal education in general. In its very first pages the Bible shows us indirectly, but none the less clearly, what the attitude to learning, knowledge, or wisdom was in the earliest times. Thus, for instance, the Paradise story, approached from an educational angle. There is a wistfulness about this story, a yearning after some "golden era" of the past, gone never to return. In those days, so the people dreamt, there was no hard work, "in the sweat of the brow," and the earth was not yet so reluctant to yield up its fruit. Nor was it necessary for man to be constantly on his guard against the ferocity of the beast; there was peace between him and the animal kingdom. Life was simple and happy. Man needed only to tend the trees in the garden; and as to water—it flowed in abundance. Now all this is changed. Why? All because man arrogantly began to reach out after knowledge, which belongs to the gods. The only "benefit" brought by knowledge is the need for clothes, which is not considered a mark of progress, or a step leading in the direction of greater happiness. This story reflects the mood of an age, in the remote past, when education, learning of any kind beyond that needed in the simple life of the primitive peasant, was regarded as suspect, even harmful. Later ages merely repeated it, or read into it their own ideas without suspecting its original implications, but even the mere repetition is not without its significance.

Teaching of a kind there was even in the earliest times, but this was of an entirely practical nature: advice, guidance, and direction as required by immediate needs. There were laws and customs and statutes handed down from generation to generation. These were in the keeping

of the priests, to whom one could apply in case of need. We find in the Bible concrete cases, mainly in matters between man and God, in which the guidance of the priests was sought.<sup>9</sup>

There were also elders and judges who decided in matters arising between man and his neighbour, and seers or prophets who "divined" or had "visions."<sup>10</sup> Wherever there are "codes" and "statutes" some form of teaching is implied, regular or occasional, for their preservation and interpretation. Such teaching was no doubt carried on within the priestly caste, the priests thus being the first teachers in Israel; but it is most unlikely that it extended to children. Similarly, within the prophetic order the forms and methods of their work were taught to younger members—the "sons of the prophets." As we know from the Bible, there were at times as many as a hundred sitting before one teacher. These were what may be called the first schools in Israel.

But as to the mass of the people the concept of education, of teaching and learning as a continuous process unconnected with immediate practical needs, hardly existed in the earlier times. There was as yet no regular term to denote either learning or teaching. Instead, it is usually "commanding," "warning," "showing," or "declaring."<sup>11</sup> The idea of education first appeared with the emergence of prophecy from "seeing" or "divination" into preaching, exhorting, and teaching. It is in the Book of Deuteronomy that the primitive ideas of "guiding" or "instructing" definitely gave place to the conceptions of teaching and learning in the modern sense: education had arrived.<sup>12</sup> As yet it was not a regular form of social activity; nor was there any clear appreciation of the value of formal education for children; a long time was to pass before this ultimate phase of development was reached. But once the idea had emerged it was inevitable that it should seek its

realisation through a suitable social institution. Such an institution, the Synagogue, came into being as a result of the political and spiritual crisis of the Babylonian captivity.

### III

The circumstances leading up to the rise of this institution may be described as follows. Before the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. there were two spiritual tendencies, sharply antagonistic, struggling for supremacy in the life of the Jewish community. There was the priest, representing the static element, with his realistic views on life, his minute ceremonialism and sacrificial ritual, centred round temple and shrine, with his religious outlook, strongly local and tribal. But there was also the prophet, representing the dynamic element, with his stubborn refusal to submit to facts, his vehement demands for a new heaven and a new earth, and his lofty universalism recognising neither national divisions nor territorial boundaries. Then came the crisis of 586 B.C.E. The temple was destroyed and the upper classes taken into captivity to Babylon. The whole priestly world was laid in ruins at one stroke. There was neither temple, nor shrine, nor sacrificial ceremonial. The fate of Judaism hung in the balance.

It was then that the people, in their extreme necessity, began to turn to the teachings of the prophets. In these they found consolation in the present as well as hope for the future. And as a result of this change of heart there arose a new institution, which, in its freedom from the restrictions of time and place and caste, was an expression of the universalism of Prophecy—the Synagogue. This did not signify the immediate displacement of the priestly by the prophetic outlook: for centuries synagogue service and temple ritual were carried on side by side. It was an attempt, under stress of external circumstances, at a higher

synthesis of the two, which was not achieved until after the final downfall of the political state as a result of the disastrous Roman wars.

The Synagogue, "the greatest practical achievement of the Jewish people,"<sup>13</sup> in the words of a well-known scholar, was the "forerunner of the Church and the Mosque," but it was also, what is important for the history of education, the first school for adults, or popular university. People would come together, perhaps once a week on the Sabbath, and one more learned than the others would read and explain some passages from the Scriptures. The liturgy grew up gradually around the instruction which must have been at first the chief purpose of these meetings.<sup>14</sup> The teaching of children at that period, and indeed for long afterwards, was still entirely in the hands of the parents. But even in its earliest form the Synagogue supplied an important means of indirect education for them. For the children would accompany their elders on their visits to those religious gatherings, and there they would listen to the discourses and learn to join in the prayers, thus being gradually initiated into the life of the community.<sup>15</sup>

From an early period Jewish religious ceremonial, as will be shown later, had as one of its principal aims this practical education of the child, and was designed largely with a view to appealing to his imagination and arousing his interest in the religious and social institutions of his people.

To the early post-exilic period belong the first hesitating efforts at the creation of an elementary educational terminology. The teacher is referred to as "one who causes to understand," or "to be wise"—"mevin," "maskil"—words which failed to win wide acceptance; but there is also a tentative use of the term which permanently established itself in Jewish education—"melammed"; and the pupil is denoted by a word which has remained in general use down to the present day—"talmid."<sup>16</sup> The earliest

teachers were apparently sent out from Jerusalem to travel from place to place with copies of the "book of the law." Their method was to read and explain passages from Scripture—a method which remained fundamental in the Jewish school throughout the ages.<sup>17</sup> It was in that period, too, that the new "Assyrian" alphabet was adopted for Hebrew, a reform which greatly facilitated the spread of literacy. This was the beginning of Jewish popular education.

Two centuries later Palestine, as part of the Persian empire, came for the first time into actual contact with Hellenism when that empire was conquered by the armies of Alexander the Great. The Jewish people were dazzled by the splendours of the new culture. The Greek language and literature, Greek institutions, customs, and practices spread among the upper classes of the community, and the foundations of Judaism, of the Jewish way of life, were profoundly shaken. Then came the inevitable reaction. The Jews displayed a power of resistance to the Hellenistic rulers which must have been unexpected by them. The educational activities of the preceding two centuries had brought about a remarkable spiritual transformation, especially amongst the common people. The Maccabean revolt against Syria resulted in the establishment of an independent Jewish state which lasted for two-thirds of a century. The Greeks were expelled; Hellenistic influences could not be eradicated. The first Hasmonean to assume the royal crown was named Aristobulus and called himself Philhellen. But Judaism was then already strong enough to be able to take from Hellenism all that it found useful without endangering its future development.

At that time, it would appear, a new stage was reached in the growth of Jewish popular education with the foundation of schools for youths of sixteen and seventeen. We know little of the organisation of these schools, but it seems

likely that their establishment was due to the initiative of Simon the son of Shetah, the leader of the Pharisees, who was, perhaps, the brother of Queen Salome Alexandra.<sup>18</sup> The aim of the new educational institution seems to have been the promotion of the teaching of the Pharisees, and the subject-matter was most likely the interpretation of the Scriptures according to the tradition of the Oral Law. The method of study, as seen later in the Talmud, was not unlike that of the Greek rhetorical school—for instance, the practice of arguing on both sides of a case. Before the Maccabean wars, it should be remembered, the purely Greek gymnasium for youths had already made its appearance in Jerusalem.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that the rise of the Jewish school for youths owed something to Hellenistic influence, to which it was partly intended to act as an antidote.

From this it was but a short and an inevitable step to the elementary school for young children. Private, fee-paying schools, set up by individual teachers, Jewish and even non-Jewish, gradually spread through the country. Public control and organisation did not come until after the Roman wars, which resulted in the destruction of the Jewish political state. This was a turning-point in the history of Judaism; it brought the development of Jewish popular education to its final stage: the establishment of the publicly organised and publicly controlled elementary school.

Elementary education after that spread very rapidly, until by the fourth century C.E. it became practically universal; at any rate, as far as boys were concerned. In the course of a discussion between two scholars of the middle of the fourth century C.E., one of them asks: “Is it possible to find anyone without elementary school knowledge?” The other answers: “Yes, it is possible with a child who was taken captive among non-Jews.”<sup>20</sup>

It will thus be seen that the development of Jewish popular education was marked by three definite stages: the rise of the Synagogue during, or soon after, the Babylonian captivity; the establishment of schools for youths in the period following the Maccabean wars; and the foundation of the public elementary school after the destruction of the second temple by the Romans and the downfall of the political state. In each case, it will be noticed, an external political event served as a stimulus to accelerate the process of inner development. Popular education began with the teaching of adults, gradually extending downwards until, after six or seven hundred years, it reached the child. But once fully established it continued along essentially the same lines, without a break, down to the end of the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

I.—Evidence for the existence of the elementary school outside Talmudic literature. Direct evidence in Talmudic literature. The tradition about Joshua ben Gamala; its interpretation as an historical outline of the development of elementary education. II.—The current view on the rise of the elementary school. Illustration from Professor Klausner's "History." Criticism of the current view. III.—Did "compulsory" and "universal" education ever exist among the Jews? Evidence against it. The illiterate class. Schools were still uncommon in the second century c.e. The idea of the father as the teacher was deeply rooted. The gradual shifting of the conception of education from the individual to the social plane. The lack of educational facilities in the third century c.e. The story of Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya. Moral persuasion instead of legal compulsion. General elementary education was accomplished about the fourth century c.e.

#### I

THE story of the rise and development of the Jewish popular school system, and particularly of the elementary school, presented in the preceding pages, is radically different from the current view and seems to require further substantiation before it can hope to win acceptance. It is necessary, in the first place, to consider the evidence bearing on the subject.

Outside Talmudic literature there is no direct evidence as to the rise of the elementary school.

Certain passages from Philo and Josephus figure prominently in the writings of historians, who regard them as proving the existence of an almost universal school system in Palestine before the destruction of the second temple. Philo says: "Since the Jews esteem their laws as divine

revelations and are instructed in the knowledge of them from their earliest youth, they bear the image of the law in their souls." Josephus is more explicit: "We take most pains of all with the instruction of children, and esteem the observation of the laws and the piety corresponding with them the most important affair of our whole life." And again: "He [Moses] commanded to instruct children in the elements of knowledge, to teach them to walk according to the laws, and to know the deeds of their forefathers."<sup>1</sup>

One cannot fail to note that these passages are of an obviously apologetic character, and that they contain no mention of schools. The most natural interpretation is that they refer to parental training of children in religious observances. This form of education was at all times an important element in Jewish social and religious life, but it was not necessarily of a formal character, nor did it always include such a subject as, for instance, reading, especially when the father himself could not do it. In Rome, too, we are told, after 450 B.C.E. every boy had to learn the laws of the twelve tables and to be able to explain their meaning. But up to about 300 B.C.E. education there had been entirely confined to the home.<sup>2</sup> In the aristocratic circles to which both Philo and Josephus belonged it may be assumed that this domestic training was of a more thorough-going character and included also secular subjects, such as Greek literature and philosophy, for which private teachers were engaged.<sup>3</sup> At any rate these general statements are too vague to admit the inference of the existence of an organised popular school system.

Even in Talmudic literature the direct evidence as to the beginnings of the elementary school is extremely scanty. There is a tradition, consisting of a single line, stating that "Simon the son of Shetah arranged that children should go to school." No further details are given as to the

nature of the "school," its organisation, or its scope of work. The only other tradition on the origin of the school is contained in a well-known passage which may be regarded as the most important direct evidence in our possession.

"Truly that man is to be remembered for good—Joshua ben Gamala is his name—but for whom the Torah<sup>4</sup> would have been forgotten among Israel. Because formerly he who had a father was taught by him the Torah; but he who had no father did not learn it. How did they explain it? 'And you shall teach them' was interpreted to mean 'and you yourselves shall teach.'<sup>5</sup> Then it was arranged that teachers of children should be placed in Jerusalem. How did they explain it? 'For out of Zion shall go forth the Torah.'<sup>6</sup> And still he who had a father was taken up by him to Jerusalem to be taught; he who had no father did not go up to learn. Then it was arranged that teachers should be placed in every district and that the pupils should be admitted at the age of sixteen or seventeen. But he with whom his teacher got angry rebelled and left. Until Joshua ben Gamala came and arranged that teachers should be placed in every province and in every city, and that the pupils should be admitted at the age of six or seven."<sup>7</sup>

It will be noticed that these traditions apparently give different founders for the school: according to the first, it was Simon ben Shetah, said to be the brother of Queen Salome, who reigned from 76 to 67 B.C.E.; according to the second, it was Joshua ben Gamala, the High Priest who lived a hundred and twenty-five years later. But the contradiction, which some writers are at pains to reconcile, seems to be merely imaginary. It is more reasonable to regard the two reports as complementary to one another. The second takes up the story where it was left by the first and carries it a step further.<sup>8</sup>

For a number of reasons it would not be safe to treat this latter tradition as a strictly historical document, especially as far as practical detail is concerned. Joshua ben Gamala, it should be remembered, occupied the office of High Priest just before the Roman war, a time of social and political upheaval. It would be difficult to think of a less suitable period for the institution of such a reform as elementary education on a wide scale. Another reason which makes the literal historicity of this important document somewhat doubtful is that they in whose name it is recorded lived almost two hundred years after Joshua ben Gamala.<sup>9</sup>

And yet we may see in it a fairly correct historical outline of the development of elementary education. Beginning with the earliest period, when children's education was entirely of a domestic nature, it goes on to the establishment of schools for youths. This, as we are told in the other tradition, took place in the time of Simon ben Shetah, when the Pharisees regained power. From there it proceeds to elementary education, the beginning of which is placed towards the end of the second temple period.

According to the view advanced in the preceding chapter the growth of the elementary school was a very gradual process. Its real development as a public institution began after the destruction of the temple, and the period of its most rapid spread came with the downfall of Bar-Kochba in 135 C.E. By the fourth century C.E. the process of development reached its completion with the elementary school for boys as a publicly organised and controlled institution.

## II

A fairly typical statement of the current view on the rise of the elementary school will be found in Professor Klausner's "History" ("Historiyyah Yisreelith"). In volume three of his "History" we read:

“Simon ben Shetah arranged that children should go to school. The word for school—‘Beth-hasepher’—is formed in the spirit of the Hebrew language and is so natural that we are forced to assume that it was coined at the latest in the Hasmonean period, when Hebrew was generally revived. It is therefore almost certain that the word, together with the institution, was created by Simon ben Shetah. Until his time the fathers used to teach their own children . . . or the Synagogue officials—‘Hazzan’<sup>10</sup>—who either went about from house to house or got them together in the Synagogue in a casual way. But in the days of the Hasmoneans, when the Pharisees had the management of internal affairs, they took measures to spread a knowledge of the Torah by the institution of popular schools. As Simon was at the head of the Pharisees, he was the founder of the Jewish school. . . . It is clear to me that Simon was the founder of the popular school in Jerusalem, and, perhaps towards the end of his life, also in all the important provincial towns; and Joshua ben Gamala, who served as High Priest for a little over a year, instituted such schools in every province and in every town.”<sup>11</sup>.

The development of the school according to this was therefore somewhat as follows: At first irregular teaching in the Synagogue, or at home, by the Synagogue official; then the establishment by Simon of popular schools in Jerusalem and other large towns, presumably as independent institutions, apart from the Synagogues. Nothing further is said as to the organisation or nature of these schools.

In volume four of his “History,” Professor Klausner returns to the subject and becomes a little more explicit: “The establishment of schools in the time of Simon was restricted to Jerusalem alone. But Joshua ben Gamala arranged that teachers should be placed in every province

and in every town and that children should be admitted at the age of six or seven. The school was apparently connected with the Synagogue, and Josephus"—who does not mention Joshua as the author of this reform—"did not understand that at the same time when the destruction of the political state was brought about by the high priests, one of their number, Joshua, prepared for the salvation of the people by the institution of a universal education system, the first in the world. . . ." Joshua ben Gamala's period of office, it will be remembered, fell between 63-65 c.e., when the dark shadows of the Roman war were already hanging low over Palestine, and when the conditions for educational reforms could hardly be more unfavourable. As to Simon, it is difficult to realise that all the talk of his educational activities is based on a single line in Talmudic tradition, unsupported from anywhere else, except by such general statements as those quoted from Philo and Josephus which are taken to prove the universality of education among Jews in early times.

Other writers on the subject differ in details. Some, like Klausner, speak of "universal" education, presumably investing the term with its usual connotation, or else using it in a loose manner. Others speak vaguely of "children" in general. Still others mention only boys. But they all exhibit a remarkable unanimity as to the establishment by some authority of a compulsory system of education, that authority more usually taken to be Joshua ben Gamala.<sup>12</sup>

### III

This generally accepted view that a system of popular education, compulsory and "universal," whatever this latter term may be intended to express, was introduced among Jews by some authority before the destruction of the second temple shows a curious lack of historic perspective;

it is the projection of a modern idea into a time and a set of conditions where it could not fit. Compulsory education in the modern sense never existed among the Jews, nor, for that matter, amongst any other people in ancient times. Sparta was the only possible exception, but there it would be more correct to speak of military conscription for boys over the age of seven than of compulsory education.<sup>13</sup> The whole weight of indirect evidence is against this view. All the evidence for it is contained in the Talmudic tradition, already dealt with, which mentions Joshua ben Gamala as the founder of the elementary school. But that tradition does not contain a word about the compulsory attendance of all or any children; it merely speaks of the provision of educational facilities. The position was very likely similar to that of pre-war Russia, for instance. There, too, facilities for education were provided in towns and some villages; these were lamentably inadequate, and large numbers of people, in fact the great majority, either would not or could not avail themselves of them.

That large numbers of children, both in Palestine and Babylonia, did not attend schools in the period under discussion is abundantly clear from the picture presented to us in Talmudic literature. The existence of the uneducated, or illiterate class—the “am-haarez”—and the social and religious abyss between them and the adherents of the Pharisees, is in itself sufficient to destroy any idea of “compulsory” and “universal” education among Jews of those times. The contempt, even the hate, which is so often apparent in the relations of the educated to the “am-haarez” reminds one strongly of the arrogant attitude of the Hellene towards the Barbarian, or even to the Helot. According to a famous rabbi of the second century c.e., “One is obliged to say three blessings every day: ‘Who has not made me a heathen; who has not made me a woman; who has not made me an ‘am-haarez.’’” I. H.

Weiss hears in that an echo of the practice of Socrates to thank God every day for his having been born a human being and not an animal, a man and not a woman, a Greek and not a Barbarian.<sup>14</sup> And the "am-haarez," we are told on good authority, did not give his children an education. There was nobody to compel him to do it.<sup>15</sup>

Even in the second century c.e. schools were not at all common, and teaching was mainly done by the father—if he were able to do it. Rabbi Akiba, the greatest scholar of his time and the spiritual leader during the Bar-Kochba rebellion, when speaking on the teaching of children, says simply and naturally: "When thou teachest thy son, teach him out of a well-corrected book."<sup>16</sup> The idea that it was the father's duty to teach his sons was deeply rooted and held its ground long after the school had become a recognised institution. "It is the father's duty to teach his son" is the plain statement of the Mishnah, and we find that this was the practice of various scholars in later ages.<sup>17</sup> In this connection the following is rather significant: "It is well known to Him who has created the world by His word that the son fears his father more than his mother, because it is the father who teaches him the Torah." This practice was largely responsible for the existence of the illiterate class at a time when Jewish learning had already reached a high stage of development.

On the other hand, there are numerous passages in Talmudic literature whose apparent purpose seems to have been to counteract this practice and to emphasise the social side of education. The following are typical examples: "He who studies the Torah, but does not teach it to others, of him it is said, 'He despised the word of the Lord.'" "He who learns for the sake of teaching others, will be given the opportunity both to learn and to teach." "He who teachers the Torah to his friend's son, it is reckoned to him as if he had given him birth." "And thou shalt

teach them to thy children—this is to be interpreted, ‘To thy pupils.’ For thus you find everywhere that pupils are called ‘children,’ as it is said, ‘You are children to the Lord your God.’” The teacher was acting vicariously for the father.<sup>18</sup> One can trace in these sayings the shifting of the conception of education from the individual to the social plane and the gradual emergence of the school as a publicly controlled institution.

Even in the third century and later there were communities where no facilities existed for elementary education. This appears quite clearly from such statements as the following, all emanating from that period: “A scholar is not permitted to live in a town where there are no elementary teachers.” Or, “Any town where there are no schools is to be destroyed.” The well-known saying by a scholar of the third century that Jerusalem was destroyed because school-children were kept idle there quite obviously was prompted by the state of affairs in his own time.<sup>19</sup> The following report of a discussion between two rabbis of that period throws rather an instructive light on the state of education in Palestine and deserves translation in full.

“When Rabbi Hanina and Rabbi Hiyya had an argument, Rabbi Hanina said, ‘How can you argue with me? If the Torah, God forbid, were forgotten in Israel, I would restore it by my dialectic powers.’ Said Rabbi Hiyya, ‘How can you argue with me? I am preventing the Torah from being forgotten in Israel. I go and plant flax and weave nets and catch gazelles. Their flesh I give to orphans for food; of the skins I make scrolls on which I write out the five books of Moses. Then I go up to a town where there are no teachers for children and teach five boys to read the five books, each one a different book. Similarly I teach six boys the six volumes of the Mishnah, and I say to them, ‘Until I come back let every one of you teach to his fellow

the reading of his book of the Pentateuch, or his volume of the Mishnah." " Such was the position in a community amongst whom, we are told, " compulsory " and " universal " education had been introduced some centuries before.

Generations after Joshua ben Gamala the rabbis found it necessary to insist strongly on the importance of " starting young." " He who studies in childhood, what can he be likened to? To ink written on new paper. But he who studies in old age, what is he like to? To ink written on blotted paper." This is amplified elsewhere, in apt similes, by various scholars of the first and second centuries c.e.<sup>21</sup> All this would have had no point if education had been anything like general, let alone " compulsory " and " universal." It seems clear that the contrary was true. Many people started late; many more had their education altogether neglected. In the absence of legal compulsion, moral persuasion was resorted to. A continuous and powerful appeal was made to the religious feelings of the people. Success came only very gradually and slowly; but when it did come and general education was accomplished, about the fourth century c.e., it rested on a surer foundation than any law enacted by public authority could have given it. That was the conviction of the individual Jew that education was the most essential condition for the survival of Judaism, the way of life in which all his religious and social ideals found their expression.

## CHAPTER III

### THE WOMAN AND HER EDUCATION

I.—The legal position of the woman in early times. The father's power over his daughter. The husband's power over his wife. The woman's social position. The mother. Outstanding women in almost every walk of life. Conjugal affection. Illustrations from the Bible. The period of the second temple. Proverbs, chap. *xxxii*. Prominent women in fact and fiction. The education of girls in those times. II.—The gradual deterioration of the woman's social position. Hellenistic influence. Ecclesiastes. The transformation of Jewish life after the Roman wars. Leadership of learning. Education closed to the woman. The social and religious life of the woman in Talmudic times. Illustrations from rabbinical literature. Woman in early Christianity.

#### I

To see the question of the education of the girl in its proper context, it is necessary to consider the position of the woman in general in the period with which we are concerned.

The legal position of the woman among the early Hebrews, as amongst other contemporary peoples, was an unenviable one. Before her marriage she was the property of her father, who could sell her into marriage or into slavery. A special prohibition was needed to save her from the worse fate of being sold into prostitution.<sup>1</sup> It is true the father had the same power over his son, but there is little doubt that it was the daughter on whom it was more often exercised, although her monetary value was apparently lower.<sup>2</sup> One need only read the gruesome story of Judges xix. to realise the extent of the father's authority as well as of the helplessness of the daughter.<sup>3</sup> Instead of

speaking of the power of the father over his daughter, it would, however, be more correct to speak of the authority of man over woman in general. For marriage, except in special circumstances, did not necessarily mean an improvement in the girl's lot. As often as not it might amount only to a change of ownership. The wife was the purchased property of her husband, who was her lord and master, as is shown by the very Hebrew term, "Baal," by which he is commonly denoted. Even a woman of outstanding beauty and personality, when asked in marriage, consented by saying: "Behold thine handmaid is a servant to wash the feet of the slaves of my lord."<sup>4</sup>

Already in the story of the creation the woman is told in so many words: "And *he* shall rule over thee." And in one of the most important legal and religious documents of the Bible, the Ten Commandments, we read: "Neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's wife; neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's house, his field, or his man-servant, or his maid-servant, his ox, or his ass, or anything that is thy neighbour's."<sup>5</sup> The wife is simply included in a catalogue of various articles of property belonging to a man. This same equation of wives with houses or fields we find centuries later in Jeremiah: "Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall possess them." "And their houses shall be turned unto others, fields and wives together."<sup>6</sup> Woman's task in life was to work hard, to bear children, to win her husband's love, and to try and hold it. And this last was not easy, for divorce was the husband's privilege. It is the man who always "takes a wife"; it is he who can send her away—at any moment, for any reasons, or for no reason at all.<sup>7</sup>

Yet it would be a mistake to exaggerate the woman's legal disabilities, or to identify completely her legal with her social position. Besides being a daughter and a wife, woman was also a mother, and the mother's status lacked

neither dignity nor even authority. She was to be accorded the same "honour" as the father; like him she was also to be "feared." And in the matter of "fear," because there naturally was need for special stress in her case, the Bible goes out of its way to mention the mother first.<sup>8</sup> There is sufficient evidence to show that women of royal and noble birth, especially the queen and the queen-mother, exercised considerable social and political influence.<sup>9</sup> But even a woman of the common people could contrive by energy and ability to overcome her legal disadvantages and to rise to a position of social prominence. The numerous biblical heroines, from Sarah in patriarchal times to Huldah in the critical period before the fall of the first temple, bear abundant testimony to this fact. Some of these were distinguished for personality and masterfulness of character; others won popularity by the more native womanly charms. We find these outstanding women almost in every walk of life: in the home, in religion, in politics, in prophecy, in the literary art, even in military affairs.<sup>10</sup> It is a noteworthy fact that some of the most popular, as well as important, literary documents embodied in the Bible claim the authorship of women.<sup>11</sup> The achievements of these women, the names of many of whom must have been household words, could not but have a favourable effect on the attitude to women in general.

As to marital relations, it would be wrong to think that the wife was merely her husband's slave. There was no lack of conjugal loyalty and affection; and there were not a few who knew the meaning of a love "as strong as death," which could not be bought for "all the substance of one's house," and of a jealousy "as cruel as the grave."<sup>12</sup> Such love and jealousy are eloquently illustrated in the early chapters of the prophet Hosea. A simple but deeply moving account of marital devotion will be found in the following from Ezekiel: "The word of the Lord came

unto me, saying, Son of Man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke: yet neither shalt thou mourn nor weep, neither shall thy tears run down. Forbear to cry, make no mourning for the dead, bind the tire of thine head upon thee, and put on thy shoes upon thy feet, and cover not thy lips, and eat not the bread of men. So I spake unto the people in the morning: and at even my wife died. . . .”<sup>13</sup> And one of the last prophets speaks of the wife in an ultra-modern manner as of a friend and colleague, and denounces divorce as a betrayal of friendship.<sup>14</sup> It would be misleading to regard men like Hosea or Ezekiel as typical of the people as a whole. Yet their views are not without significance for the understanding of the position of women in those times. Even more significant is the fact that the union of man and woman is used symbolically by the great prophets to represent the relationship of God with His people.<sup>15</sup>

During the times of the second temple the legal position of the woman gradually improved, mainly as a result of the development of the “Oral Law,” whilst her social status was at least as good as formerly. From the earlier part of this period we have a valuable document which throws a significant light on the attitude to woman—at any rate among the higher classes of the community. Proverbs, chapter 31, may be described as an “ode to the ideal wife.” The subject is apparently a woman of the upper circles, whose “husband is known in the gates” where “he sits among the elders of the land.” The poet speaks in glowing terms of her devotion to husband and children, of her industry and ability, of her charity, wisdom, and piety. Universal praise is the reward of her virtues. It may be assumed that this “ideal of the perfect wife” was as rarely achieved as most other ideals, yet it is important to note that the description contains no suggestion of the inferior status of the wife, except perhaps that

it is the husband who "sits among the elders"—that is, takes part in the government of the community.

Many women stand out prominently in the fact and fiction of that period, some of them strongly reminiscent of earlier biblical figures. There is a Deborah and Jael combined in Judith; and the mother-martyr, in the reign of Antiochus, the tale of whose heroic sacrifice is still capable of stirring the imagination of youth.<sup>16</sup> There is Queen Salome to whose reign later ages turned back wistfully as to something like a "golden era"; and Mariamne, the unfortunate wife of Herod, who embodied the proud tradition of her own family, the Hasmoneans, as well as of the long line of outstanding women in Israel. And with her that line, at least as far as the main body of the Jewish people is concerned, seems to come to a close.<sup>17</sup>

Little can be said of the education of girls during the period under discussion. With regard to practical training of a religious or social nature the girl is mentioned as well as the boy; and the teaching of the mother is commended equally with the instruction of the father.<sup>18</sup> As to formal literary education, in so far as it was given to children by the father, or towards the end of the period by private teachers, there is no good reason to suppose that *serious* discrimination was practised against the girls. More especially since such education was the privilege mainly of the upper classes. That some preference was shown to the boy over the girl goes without saying, but this has been the case all over the world almost to our own times.

## II

The first indication of the coming change in the attitude towards woman is found in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Speaking, perhaps, from personal experience, the writer declares that woman is "more bitter than death"; "her heart is

snares and nets and her hands are as fetters"; and that whilst "he has found one man among a thousand," he "could not discover one woman among all these." This is quite a new sentiment, and no parallel can be found for it in earlier Hebrew literature.<sup>19</sup> One cannot help comparing it with such sayings as the following from a Greek writer: "On the earth and in the sea there are many wild beasts, but the worst of these is a woman." Or, "Every wife is, of course, an evil; the lucky man is he who secures the mildest."<sup>20</sup> In spite of such sayings, which can be greatly multiplied, it is probably an exaggeration to say, as some writers do, that the woman in Greece passed her life as a slave in a slave state, or that she was nothing but a means of procuring a supply of children—a kind of "isolated reproductive organ."<sup>21</sup> On the other hand, there can be little doubt that the Greeks regarded the woman as an inferior being, and marriage as mainly a duty to the state, or a necessary evil. For legal purposes the woman in Athens always remained under the tutelage of a man, and socially she was rather despised. "To the average stupid Athenian," a well-known authority says, "it was probably rather wicked for a woman to have any character, wicked for her to wish to take part in public life, wicked for her to acquire learning or to doubt any part of the conventional religion, just as it was wicked for her to deceive her husband."<sup>22</sup>

Now, we shall be in a better position to understand the change of attitude towards the woman among Jews when we remember that from the middle of the fourth century B.C.E. Hellenistic influence became an increasingly important factor in Jewish life, and especially in the development of Jewish educational thought and practice. After the destruction of the second temple we shall hear Jewish rabbis speaking of the woman almost as contemptuously as some of the Hellenistic philosophers, and sometimes

even using their identical expressions, thus pointing clearly to the source of their inspiration.

The following may serve to illustrate the gradual degradation of the status of the Jewish woman from the Hellenistic period onwards. A rabbi of that period warns his disciples, amongst other things, against indulgence in much conversation with women. This saying is interpreted in a later age to apply even to one's own wife, and on the basis of it conversation with women is stated to bring evil upon a man and to lead him to hell. Still later the very voice of woman is proclaimed as lewdness—woman has already reached the state of being regarded merely as a means to an end, an instrument for perpetuating the community: the “fall of woman” from her former position was complete.<sup>23</sup>

The foregoing is not intended to mean that the radical change in the position of the Jewish woman in post-biblical times was entirely, or even chiefly, due to Hellenistic influence. There can be little doubt that the incursion of this foreign influence played a not unimportant part in this as in many other spheres of Jewish life. The chief cause, however, must be sought elsewhere. It was the transformation of Jewish life, in form and in content, which resulted from the Roman wars and the destruction of the second temple. The political state gave place to the religious community, and popular education—“the study of the Torah”—became the principal, almost the only, outlet for Jewish group life. Leadership no longer went with birth, with membership of a class or a caste, or, as so often in the past, even with inspiration, but with distinction in scholarship. “After the destruction of the temple,” the rabbis say, “the prophetic gift was taken from the prophets, but not from the scholars,” and so “the scholar is superior to the prophet.”<sup>24</sup> For it was no longer a political leadership, but a leadership of learning. It

could be achieved only by one means—education in the narrow sense in which it came to be understood then, the study of the “Written” and the “Oral” Law. But this means was closed to the woman, who was effectively debarred from either teaching or learning in the schools which began to multiply at that time. In this the Jewish woman found herself in a similar position to that of the Hellenistic woman. But in her case this exclusion from the school carried with it also the exclusion from every form of public activity and her reduction to the position of a subservient and inarticulate partner in Jewish life. She was coupled with the illiterate as a matter of course; or, when religious ceremonial was concerned, with the slave and the minor—a manner of speech borrowed from the Greek. And it became quite natural for a pious Jew to thank God that he was not born a heathen, a slave, or a woman. And here, again, he did not even suspect that he shared these sentiments with some heathen Greek philosophers!<sup>25</sup>

In the whole of the vast Talmudic literature there is only one voice raised in favour of girls’ education. Ben-Azzai, a colleague of Rabbi Akiba, held the opinion that it was a father’s duty to teach his daughter the Torah. Ben-Azzai was a bachelor.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, there is abundant evidence, direct and indirect, in rabbinical literature which leaves no doubt whatever that the average woman was deprived of every opportunity of formal education, either secular or religious.<sup>27</sup> This evidence relates mainly to the communities in Palestine and Babylonia, but the opinion may be safely hazarded that the position elsewhere was not materially different.

The woman’s wisdom was to find its outlet only in the spindle; her function was to produce children.<sup>28</sup> As a girl in her father’s house all her energy is given to menial domestic tasks: grinding corn, drawing water, carrying about her little brothers until they begin to go to school.

Their intellectual abilities will be developed, whilst hers, because she stays at home, will be retarded.<sup>29</sup> For her father is not obliged to teach her the Torah; even if he should desire it, it would be wrong for him to do so. The woman is naturally a light-minded and irresponsible creature, and her congenital incapacity might lead her to turn the study of the Torah into frivolity.<sup>30</sup> He will negotiate, even on the Sabbath, with a teacher for her brothers; but the only talk about her, perhaps on the same Sabbath day, will be how to marry her off more quickly.<sup>31</sup> And when she will be married and have her own children, it will not be her function to provide for their education, or to initiate them into religious observances.<sup>32</sup> And yet it will be she who will take the little boys in the mornings to the school at the Synagogue, and this will be accounted a merit to her. And if her husband is a scholar, she may gain some appreciation by sitting at home of nights and waiting for him to return from the "house of study."<sup>33</sup> But, although unable to read, she will manage somehow to pick up a knowledge of the prayers and will visit the Synagogue as often as she can. She might even take the trouble to go to a distant Synagogue rather than to the one nearest her home so as to win an added reward for her exertions.<sup>34</sup>

This is the picture of the woman's social, religious and educational life which we are able to reconstruct from Talmudic material. One important factor in the situation was, it would seem, the custom of early marriage; marriage arrangements for girls in their infancy were not an uncommon thing. And the father's power was unlimited. "If he wanted to give his daughter to a leper he could do so."<sup>35</sup> In such circumstances regular attendance at school, or even systematic formal education outside it, was hardly possible. What the closure of the school meant to the woman in an age when the study of the Torah was recognised as "the highest good" is forcibly expressed by the rabbis in the

following: "A boy is born—everybody is glad; a girl is born—everybody is sad." "The world cannot go on without males nor without females. Happy is he whose children are males; alas for him whose children are females."<sup>36</sup>

There was a close similarity between Greek and Jewish custom with regard to the early marriage of the girl and her father's unlimited power in the matter. It was at least partly due to this that both in Athens and in Jerusalem schools were reserved for boys alone.<sup>37</sup> It may be added that, with the exception of the new community in Palestine, the negative attitude to girls' education has not yet died out among Jews even at the present day.

It is instructive to find that woman's position in the first centuries of Christianity underwent a similar process of development, or rather deterioration, to that described in the preceding pages. In the Gospels women are prominent, and in the enthusiasm of the early Christian movement they were allowed to do whatever they were fitted to do. But soon an ascetic current set in which deeply affected the position of woman in the ancient Church. As among Jews, she was forbidden to teach,<sup>38</sup> and the highest position left to her in the Church was that of doorkeeper or message-woman. The production of children was to be the sole object of marriage, and the main duty of the wife, passive obedience to her husband—her lord and master. Some went further and considered that even marriage for the sake of children was a carnal indulgence, and that the woman was sent on earth to inflame the heart of man with every evil passion.

The following extracts will show to what lengths this other-worldly outlook could go. Clement of Alexandria writes: "Nothing disgraceful is proper for man who is endowed with reason, much less for woman, to whom it brings shame to reflect of what nature she is." And Tertullian, who was aware of the religious value of marriage

and, indeed, gave to it a beautiful expression, yet found it possible to write the following: "The sentence of God on the sex remains to this day in force. Thou (woman) art the gateway of Satan, thou art the opener of the fatal tree, the first deserter of the Divine law; thou art she who enticed him whom the Devil dared not attack. Thou didst thus easily break God's image which is man. . . ."<sup>39</sup>

These views represent one of the moods of the age, another one being the cynical contempt for woman of some Hellenistic philosophers. In the writings of the rabbis we find something of both these moods, but a characteristic sense of reality helped them to escape from either extreme. It was not, however, sufficient to save the woman from being denied her share in the activity on which the very existence of the world was declared to depend—the study of the Torah.<sup>40</sup>

PART II  
ORGANISATION



## CHAPTER IV

### THE BASIC PRINCIPLES OF ORGANISATION

I.—Hellenistic influence. Contrasts between the Jewish and the Spartan systems of education. Similarities between the schools of Athens and of Palestine. The “Greek” cities in Palestine. The Jewish communities in the Diaspora. Greek influence on the development of post-biblical Hebrew. The Palestinian Jews were acquainted with the Hellenistic school organization. The pervasive influence of Hellenism. Dr. Boyd's view that the Jews “adopted the Hellenic institution of the school.” This view is an overstatement of the case. The necessary conditions for the rise of formal education had existed in Palestine before the Hellenistic period. Hellenism was only a factor of secondary importance. II.—The father's individual responsibility for the instruction of his sons was the basic principle of Jewish education. The early school was a private and independent institution. General control by the community. Fees. Distinction between higher education and elementary education. Free teaching of the “Oral Law.” Fees in elementary education were not fixed. The gradual tightening of communal control. Yet ultimately the school remained a private venture. The effect of this system upon the education of the poor. Comparison with the Athenian school.

#### I

It will be convenient at this stage to examine in a general way the question of Hellenistic influence on the development of Jewish popular education. This will serve to introduce our next subject: the organisation of the early Jewish elementary school.

One would not expect to find any similarity between the Jewish and the Spartan systems of education. These two were sharply opposed in every essential feature. There could be nothing in common between a military state based on slavery, which destroyed the family and aimed

at the complete suppression of the individual; and a religious commonwealth, as the Jewish community became after the destruction of the second temple, which regarded the family as its unit of organisation and rested on the foundation of the moral responsibility of the individual. The Spartan school was the military barracks; the Jewish school was from its inception a house of study and prayer—the Synagogue.<sup>1</sup>

But the case is quite different with Athenian education. There were striking similarities between the schools of Athens and Palestine which, as will be shown again and again later on, it would be difficult to regard as mere coincidences. It should be borne in mind that from the latter part of the fourth century B.C.E. the Jews lived in the midst of a world which was rapidly becoming Hellenised—at least to the extent of adopting the external forms of Greek culture. During the Hellenistic period about thirty “Greek” cities were established in Palestine: along the Mediterranean coast, in Transjordania and especially around the Sea of Galilee; and an attempt was made by Hellenised Jews immediately before the Maccabean revolt to establish such a “Greek” city even in Jerusalem itself. The organisation of these towns was modelled on the “city states” of Greece and, externally at any rate, they were centres of Greek culture, in their language and in their political, social and religious institutions.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the Hasmonean period large numbers of Jews settled in these towns, where they lived in close contact with the non-Jewish population. These Jews were natural “carriers” of Hellenistic influences.<sup>3</sup> What a powerful factor Hellenistic influence was in moulding Jewish cultural, social and industrial life may be judged from the vast number of Greek words that have found their way into post-biblical Hebrew. These words are met with in connection with all sorts of subjects, including

education.<sup>4</sup> In addition there were the communities of the Diaspora, of which Alexandria may be mentioned as an outstanding example. There Hebrew was completely displaced by Greek as the vernacular of the Jewish masses, and this created the need for the translation of the Scriptures into the latter language. There can be no doubt at all that these Jews, who lived in the midst of a Hellenistic population and spoke its language, were familiar with Greek educational institutions.

But even in Palestine itself it seems quite clear that the Jews had the opportunity to acquaint themselves at first hand with the Hellenistic school organisation of which some of them were ready to take advantage. The following text is significant in this respect: "One is not to hand over to the idolaters" (a reference to the Hellenistic population of the Palestinian towns) "a child for the purpose of teaching him letters, or a trade . . . but one may hand over a child to the 'Kuthim'—descendants of the old Samaritans—for instruction in letters or in a trade."<sup>5</sup> The need for this prohibition, which had no other force behind it but public opinion and religious sentiment, shows clearly enough that cases of Jewish parents sending their children to Hellenistic schools were not uncommon.

In the struggle between Judaism and Hellenism the former held its ground. This was a foregone conclusion. A people like the Jews, which at that time had already reached a high degree of national consciousness and, long before it had met with the Greeks, had already produced men like Isaiah, Jeremiah, or Ezra, could not give up its individuality and simply exchange its way of life for that of any other people, however gifted. Yet, as we have seen, it was by no means proof against the pervasive influence of Hellenism, nor even unwilling to benefit from it. It is therefore important to ask how much the Jewish school

system, as it developed during the Talmudic period, owed to this influence.

Dr. Boyd, to whose "History of Western Education" reference has already been made, concludes his short chapter on Jewish education with the following words: "There is a curious irony in the fact that the Jews, in seeking to save themselves from being overborne by the Greek culture, should have adopted the Hellenic institution of the school for their children and the Hellenic practice of disputation for their young men. It is a striking testimony to the tremendous power of that culture that the one Oriental people who succeeded in freeing themselves from its influence did so by making use of its educational methods."<sup>6</sup>

Dr. Boyd has rendered a valuable service to the study of early Jewish education by thus directing attention forcefully to the important factor of Hellenistic influence. As will be shown frequently later, many aspects that are otherwise obscure about the Jewish school in Talmudic times become intelligible by reference to this factor. Yet it is an overstatement of the case to say that the Jews have "adopted the Hellenic institution of the school." Long before the Hellenistic period all the conditions necessary for the rise of popular education were already in existence in Palestine. There was the potential school centre—the Synagogue. From very early times, as was shown elsewhere, children attended the services, of which instruction in the form of popular lectures was the central feature. There was the teaching body, the "scribes," engaged in the actual work of teaching since the time of Ezra. It is significant that in later centuries the elementary schoolmaster is often called by the name which denoted the scribe—"Sopher"—thus testifying to the continuity of the development of popular education. There was also the subject-matter for literary education—those parts of the

Scriptures, such as the Pentateuch, which later formed the staple content of instruction; and at least the beginnings of the liturgy, which was growing up along with the Synagogue. There was even the method of study which may be regarded as characteristic of Jewish education throughout the ages—the reading and interpretation of a Scriptural text. This method was already used at the “Great Assembly” in the time of Nehemiah.<sup>7</sup> The combination of these elements into an organised school was a natural and inevitable development. It could be accelerated or retarded by external factors of a political or military nature. Its inspiration and its driving force came from within.

Moreover, even as an external factor Hellenistic influence was only of secondary importance. The turning-point in the history of Jewish popular education was the disastrous Roman war which terminated in 70 C.E. with the destruction of the temple. It was after that, and even more so after the abortive rebellion of Bar-Kochba, 132-135 C.E., that the centre of gravity of Jewish communal life was shifted from the political to the spiritual plane, where it has remained down to the present day. It was then that the people concentrated on the work of education, the chief weapon in its struggle for existence as a separate entity. During the three centuries following the Roman war popular education spread rapidly throughout Jewry; it became almost universal for boys by the time the Hellenistic schools of the classical world had fallen into decay.

## II

The preceding discussion will help us to a better understanding of the development of Jewish education as a social institution. The basis of organisation of the Jewish elementary school, its venue and equipment, its internal

arrangements, all present rather suggestive similarities with the Greek school, as we shall presently see. This, perhaps not unnaturally, led to an over-emphasised view of the extent of Hellenistic influence. On the other hand, the great majority of historians, with much less justification, altogether fail to take notice of the Hellenistic factor.<sup>8</sup> It is this latter view, which treats of Jewish education in isolation from the general movement of educational thought, that is largely responsible for the state of stagnation in which the study of our subject has remained for so long. It will be our endeavour in describing the early organisation of the Jewish school system to preserve the right balance between the two extremes. Whilst attention will be mainly directed to the development from within, an effort will be made to appraise external influences at their proper value.

The basic principle of Jewish education was the father's individual responsibility for the instruction of his children, or, more correctly, his sons. The well-known Deuteronomic injunction about teaching the Commandments to the children was popularly interpreted to mean: "And you yourselves shall teach your children."<sup>9</sup> This individualistic principle dominated Jewish education, as far as its material organisation was concerned, throughout the Talmudic period and for long afterwards. The community did not attempt to take the place of the father, nor, for a long time, did it even come to his assistance in any manner. The school in its earliest stage was a private and independent institution. There were certain restrictions imposed upon it by custom or public opinion, such, for instance, as that no woman or unmarried person was allowed to teach in it.<sup>10</sup> Beyond such general control the community did not interfere. Anyone who considered himself qualified to do so would set up "school" in his own house in the same manner as other people would set

up as tailors or tanners.<sup>11</sup> The pupils had to pay fees, and the teacher could refuse admission to those unable to do so. In the third century C.E. we read of a legendary teacher-saint who claimed that he admitted to his school the poor as well as the rich, and that he took nothing from those who were unable to pay.<sup>12</sup> The average, less saintly, teacher was obliged to adopt a more materialistic standard of conduct. Not until a century later do we hear of a ruling that communal assistance was in certain cases to be given to a teacher; but this was only for the purpose of engaging an assistant.<sup>13</sup>

It is necessary to underline the distinction between higher education, the teaching of the "Oral Law" to adults, and elementary education for children. The rabbis strongly insisted on the free teaching of the "Oral Law."<sup>14</sup> This was primarily intended to help the promotion of a knowledge of the Torah. It may have also been meant to counteract the spread among Jews of the practice of the Sophistic teachers, who charged fees and competed for pupils.<sup>15</sup> Their practice was suitable for Greece, or later for Rome, where a course of study might result in immediate material benefit for the learner, such as success in public life through effective oratory. Conditions in Palestine after 70 C.E., or in the Babylonian communities, were very different. There were no political "prizes" to be gained as a result of learning, except, of course, for the general respect which a scholar enjoyed and some minor privileges, such as immunity from certain forms of taxation.<sup>16</sup> The chief aim of education, and especially of its higher forms, was the preservation of the people under peculiarly adverse conditions. This aim could be achieved only if learning were regarded as an ultimate value, as something worth while for its own sake, and not for any material benefits it might bring. Hence the great stress in rabbinical literature on "study for its own sake"—

“Torah lishemah.” “Of the greatest sages of Israel,” Maimonides tells us, “some were hewers of wood, others were drawers of water, whilst some were blind, yet they engaged in the study of the Torah day and night.”<sup>17</sup> Allowing for some exaggeration, this is a fair enough description of the conditions of higher Jewish learning in Talmudic times, when the scholar usually combined the pursuit of knowledge with the practice of some trade.<sup>18</sup>

But higher learning was the privilege of a small minority, whilst elementary education aimed at embracing the whole male population, and it would have been a hopeless task to attempt to build up a general school system on the work of voluntary teachers. Besides, elementary teaching was, as we shall see later, a full-time occupation, demanding all the teacher’s time as well as all his energy. It was therefore generally agreed that the teacher was to be paid, if not for the actual teaching of the Torah, then at least, it was argued, for taking care of the children during the time they were in his charge.<sup>19</sup>

The fees were not apparently at a fixed rate. It was a matter for a private arrangement between the father and the teacher, who were permitted to conduct their negotiations even on the Sabbath, the amount depending upon the economic position of the parents and, presumably, also upon the standing of the teacher. A man’s earnings, we are told in a characteristic passage, are fixed in heaven at the beginning of every year, except for his expenses on Sabbaths and festivals, and on the education of his children. If he spends more on these, his allowance is increased accordingly; if he spends less, it is reduced.<sup>20</sup>

Gradually, communal control and supervision of elementary education became more effective. In the fourth century C.E. we find the teacher spoken of as a sort of public servant, who was called to his task by the community and could be removed from his post for inefficiency or neglect

of duty.<sup>21</sup> But even then it was a control without responsibility. It was a peculiar kind of arrangement in which the community had all the advantages and the teacher hardly any. He had to carry on his work under the vigilant eye of the communal heads, who demanded of him knowledge, ability and devotion to duty. Yet for his living he had to depend upon the fees he could get from his pupils. For ultimately the school remained the private venture of the teacher, just as the education of his child was the individual responsibility of the father. The community supervised the work of the one and stimulated the sense of duty of the other; beyond that it did not go until long after the close of the Talmudic period.

Under such a system much would depend upon the parents' inclination, and even more upon their material position. The rich would provide for their children an education consistent with their social position, sending them to the best schools, or engaging for them well-known private teachers. The poor, who could not afford to pay the necessary fees, would attempt to teach their own children, or leave them untaught. In the earlier period there were large numbers of such children left without any education. These formed the unlettered class to which reference has already been made. But even in later times, when elementary education became practically general for boys, the poor would still have to be content with less efficient teachers, or else would be forced to withdraw their children from school sooner than they might desire.

Now it is rather instructive to find that in its essential features, as described in the preceding pages, Jewish elementary education in the period under discussion bore a close resemblance to Athenian education. In Athens also the education of the boy was his father's individual responsibility and the school was essentially the private venture of the teacher, controlled and supervised more or less

strictly by the state. "The teachers opened the schools as private enterprises, fixing for themselves the fees and the subjects which they taught. The parents chose what they thought a suitable school according to their means and the subjects which they wished their sons to learn. . . . The poor may frequently have passed on their knowledge of letters to their sons without the expense of a school. But all this was a private transaction between parent and teacher. The state interfered with the matter only so far as to impose certain moral regulations on the schools." "The state attitude towards education . . . may be summarised in the words of Socrates to Alcibiades: 'No one, so to speak, cares a straw how you or any other Athenian is brought up.'"<sup>22</sup>

The Jewish community could not, if it were to survive, adopt such a passive attitude. It was also obliged to exercise a more rigid control over the content of education. These, however, were only differences of degree; the basic principles of organisation were the same in Jerusalem as in Athens.

There can be no doubt that the Jews learned much, consciously and unconsciously, from the Hellenistic school organisation. It was only natural that educational practices current among the non-Jewish population of Palestine should flow over into the Jewish communities, and this is, of course, even more true of the Diaspora, especially of such communities as that in Alexandria, with whom the Palestine Jews were in constant and regular communication.

It is, however, necessary to bear in mind that the form of educational organisation described here was the only possible one in the social and political conditions of those times, whether in Greece or Judea. The compulsory and universal system of education is, of course, entirely a product of the modern national state. Many centuries had to

pass after the Hellenistic period before humanity was ripe for such an advance.

Moreover, in the conditions of Jewish life as these developed after the fall of the state, and in many respects continued ever since, this semi-private type of school was the only practicable form of organisation. The communities were constantly exposed to interference from the outside which often took a violent form. The danger of persecution and expulsion was ever present. The Jews were gradually becoming "the wandering people." Under such conditions a complex and elaborate school organisation was neither possible nor even desirable. What was required was a school of a simple, mobile character, which closed one day and opened somewhere else the following day. And so it was to hard experience, more than to conscious imitation of existing models, that the Jews owed the form of school organisation which continued among them down to current times.<sup>23</sup>

## CHAPTER V

### THE SCHOOL AND ITS EQUIPMENT

I.—How the elementary school was housed. The later Talmudic period. The earlier period. The Synagogue as “the people’s house.” II.—The equipment of the school. The pupils probably sat on the ground. The tablet and the stylus. The pointer. The strap. Comparison with the Athenian school. The tradition about Rabbi Akiba. III.—Books. The advantage of the Greek school over the Jewish. The Greek boy could make his own books from his teacher’s dictation. This method was barred to the Jewish boy. The Bible was the only book available. The scarcity and costliness of books. Illustrations from the Talmud. The reverence for books. Portions of the Bible were made into special scrolls for the use of children.

#### I

ALMOST all the writers on the early history of Jewish education tell us that the home of the elementary school was generally in the Synagogue, although children were sometimes taught in the teacher’s private house. Some even state simply that the school was *always* held in the Synagogue. Thus, for example, we find in a recent book the following categorical statement: “If we consider the Talmudic texts which speak of the teaching of children, we will find everywhere that it was in the Synagogue.”<sup>1</sup> Now the evidence adduced by this writer, as well as by some others, seems formidable enough. Nevertheless, his statement cannot be accepted in the absolute form in which it is expressed. It is true for the latter part of the Talmudic period—that is, from about the end of the second century C.E.; it is quite incorrect for earlier times.

The available texts bearing on this question may be

readily divided into those belonging to the earlier, or Mishnaic period; and others which reflect the conditions of the later or post-Mishnaic period.<sup>2</sup> On analysis it will be found that the latter invariably speak of the elementary school as being part of the Synagogue, or even identify these two institutions. A few typical examples will suffice to illustrate the point.

Said Rav to Rabbi Hiyya, "How do women gain merit? By making their children learn the Scriptures in the Synagogue and their husbands learn the 'Oral Law' in the 'house of study.'"<sup>3</sup>

Raba said, "Since the reform of Joshua ben Gamala we do not transfer a child—for the purposes of education—from one town to another, but we may do so from one Synagogue to another."<sup>4</sup>

Rav Aha, son of Raba, said to Rav Ashi, "If one needs to call a man out of the Synagogue"—which one may enter only for the purpose of prayer or study—"he should ask a child, who is studying there, to tell him his verse."<sup>5</sup> "Once a man came into the Synagogue and found an elementary teacher and his son sitting there," etc.<sup>6</sup>

It will be observed that these texts, to which many more of a similar nature could be added, simply speak of the Synagogue as the place for the teaching of children. The older term for the school ("beth hasepher") is not mentioned: the school is completely merged in the Synagogue.<sup>7</sup> Now compare these with the following texts, which all clearly bear the stamp of an earlier period.

"Once a certain person spoke casually, saying, 'I remember when I was a child riding on my father's shoulder. I was fetched from the school ("beth hasepher"), stripped, and made to bathe—for the purpose of legal purification—in order that I might eat the "priests' portion" in the evening.' On the strength of his own words Rabbi declared him to be a priest."<sup>8</sup>

"It happened that the son of Gorgias of Lydda ran away from school ('beth hasepher') and his father threatened him. So he took fright and committed suicide by throwing himself into a pit. They then came to consult Rabbi Tarphon," etc.<sup>9</sup>

"Rabbi Meir says, '... This may be compared to a teacher who came to school ("beth hasepher") with a strap in his hand. Who would be afraid? He who was flogged every day would be afraid.'"<sup>10</sup>

"If one of the inhabitants of a courtyard desires to set up as a doctor . . . or as an elementary teacher, the other inhabitants may object."

"The inhabitants of a lane may compel one another not to allow a tailor, or a tanner, or an elementary teacher, or any other artisan to settle among them."<sup>11</sup>

It will be seen that in these passages, all belonging to the earlier or Mishnaic period, the school appears under its own name—"beth hasepher"—and is spoken of as an independent institution. The Synagogue is not even mentioned in connection with it. It should also be noticed that elementary education is treated as a private venture, and the teacher is dealt with in the same manner as other tradesmen, such as the tailor, the tanner, or the doctor.

Now, it is not intended to suggest here that in the earlier period the Synagogue never served as a place for the teaching of children. The position was very likely much the same as in Greece. There, we are told, in the early days, and in poor towns, the place of teaching was not well appointed. In many places teaching in the open air prevailed, or teachers took advantage, especially in hot weather, of colonnades or shady corners among public buildings.<sup>12</sup> The Jewish teacher, too, there is reason to believe,\* sometimes had to do his work in the open air and, like his Greek colleague, would occasionally make use

\* See A. Buchler, *J.Q.R.*, vol. iv., 1913-14.

of some public place, such as the Synagogue, although judging from the available evidence this was quite uncommon.

But in the meantime, whilst the elementary school was seeking after a suitable form of organisation, the Synagogue gradually grew in importance until it became, after the fall of the state, the centre of the religious and social life of the community. The uneducated classes called it "the people's house." This name did not please the scholars, one of whom applied to it Ezekiel's expression, "a little sanctuary."<sup>13</sup> Yet only a title like "people's house" could adequately describe an institution which came to combine within itself such a variety of functions. For it gradually absorbed most of the social and religious activities of the community. Besides being a house of prayer, it was also, as will be remembered, a house of study for adults; a place for the administration of justice; and in addition, it apparently served as a hostel for wayfarers.<sup>14</sup> It was but natural that such a vital service as elementary education should also find its home in this communal centre. And so we find that the later Talmudic texts make no reference to the school as a separate institution; it was completely absorbed by the Synagogue. But this meant more than the mere provision of more or less uniform buildings and equipment and the consequent greater facilities for the spread of the elementary school. It represented a higher stage in the development of public control over education. The teacher became, in many respects, a public official, and was liable to suffer dismissal for the neglect of his duties. Yet withal the principle of organisation remained essentially the same as before. As in Athens so also in Judea, or later in the Babylonian communities, public control over the school carried with it no responsibility for its maintenance, and the teacher was still dependent for his livelihood on the fees paid by the pupils.

To sum up: In the earlier period—that is, up to about the end of the second century c.e.—the elementary school was not, except in rare cases, housed in the Synagogue. Like the Hellenistic school, it was entirely a private enterprise, and the teaching was usually carried on in the teacher's home. The turning-point took place some time in the second century, most likely after the abortive rebellion of Bar-Kochba. The community began to exercise greater control over education, and the Synagogue, gradually developing into a centre for all important communal activities, absorbed also the elementary school. After 200 c.e. the elementary school is always identified with the Synagogue.

## II

It is not easy to piece together into a coherent picture the scattered references in Talmudic literature to the equipment of the school. It would seem that in the Academy, or high school, the students sat during their lessons. It is not, however, certain whether on benches or on the ground. Thus we read in one place: “From the days of Moses until the time of Rabban Gamaliel people studied the Torah only in a standing position. With the death of Rabban Gamaliel a weakness came down into the world, and people sat when learning the Torah.”<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere we are told that three rows of scholars sat before the Synhedrion, or high court of justice; to which the authoritative explanation is given that the “great ones”—that is, the sages—sat on benches whilst the students sat on the ground.<sup>16</sup> This seems to be confirmed by the well-known passage in the “Ethics of the Fathers”: “Let thy home be a meeting-house for the wise; sit amidst the dust of their feet and drink their words with thirst.” In a curious text of a later period we find a rather emphatic statement on this point. “If someone comes in to you, saying, ‘Teach me the

Talmud,' do so, if you can; if not, send him away at once. And let him not sit before you either on a chair or on a bench, but let him sit before you on the ground."<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, a scholar of the third century C.E. gives it as his view, supporting it from a biblical text, that no distinction must be made between teacher and pupil: they must both sit either on a couch or on the ground.<sup>18</sup> The inference seems to be justified that there was no uniform practice. The teacher sat on a bench whilst the students more commonly sat on the ground, although there were apparently some who preferred standing to a sitting posture with nothing to lean back on.<sup>19</sup>

As to the elementary school there are numerous indications, mainly from the later period, pointing to the fact that the pupils were seated, most probably on the ground. The phrase in the Song of Songs, "the pomegranates bud forth," is applied to "children who sit and study the Torah, and sit in rows like the seeds of pomegranates."<sup>20</sup> But as the teaching was individual the pupil probably had to stand up when doing his turn and then go back to sit in his place.<sup>21</sup>

The scroll was apparently held on the knees. There is evidence for it in the following text, which is interesting also for other considerations. ". . . This may be likened to a man who had a young son. When his father left him and went out to the market-place, he got up and took the scroll and put it between his knees and studied it. Then the father returned and said, 'See my young son, whom I left when I went out to the market-place, what did he do? He got up and took the scroll and put it between his knees and sat and learned it.'"<sup>22</sup> The scroll spoken of here evidently refers to the special scroll for the use of school-children. As we shall see later it was not considered proper to place on the knees the ordinary "scroll of the law"—the "Sepher Torah."

Of other equipment we have several references to the wax-tablet and the stylus, both used in the teaching of the alphabet. These instruments, it may be mentioned, are denoted by Hebrew words. For other writing materials, however, many words were borrowed from Greek and simply transcribed into Hebrew, but these are not found in connection with the elementary school.<sup>23</sup>

The pointer was apparently universally used in the teaching of reading. In one of the legends about the rebellion of Bar-Kochba we read as follows: "There were 400 Synagogues in the city of Bethar; in every one of these there were 400 elementary teachers; every one of these had before him 400 pupils. When enemies entered there they pierced them with their pointers. But when the enemy—Hadrian—prevailed, they wrapped them in their scrolls and burned them in fire."<sup>24</sup> It is hardly necessary to add that the ubiquitous strap was also found in the Jewish school of Talmudic times, where it replaced the biblical rod.<sup>25</sup>

The following description of the internal arrangements of the Athenian school will be of some interest at this point. "The master sat on a high seat, from which he taught. The scholars often sat on the ground . . . or else they stood or occupied benches round him. . . . We may be sure that there were no tables or desks, such furniture being unusual in Greek houses. It was the universal custom, while reading or writing, to hold the book or roll on the knee." There, too, the pupil had apparently to stand up when taking his turn. On the vases and pictures we only see single boys mostly standing before their master to receive their lesson.<sup>26</sup> It should be remembered that in the Greek school as in the Jewish school instruction was individual, given to each pupil in his turn, the technique of class-teaching being quite a modern discovery.

The tablet and stylus were, of course, also used in the Greek school, but for the teaching of writing. Thus we

read in Protagoras: ". . . In learning to write, the writing master first draws lines with a stylus for the use of the young learner, and gives him the tablet, and makes him follow the lines."<sup>27</sup> The Jewish school in later Talmudic times, as will be shown elsewhere, did not as a rule teach any writing.

The story about Rabbi Akiba, the famous sage and spiritual leader during the rebellion of Bar-Kochba in 132-135 C.E., will serve to illustrate several of the points discussed in the preceding pages. It is, besides, of considerable importance for the history of the development of elementary education in general, and will be referred to again in later chapters.

"What was the beginning of Rabbi Akiba? It is said that when he was already forty years old, he had not yet learned anything. Once, when he stood by a well he asked, 'Who bored out that stone?' So they told him, 'Akiba, did you not read (in Job), "the waters wear away the stone"? The water which steadily falls on it did it.' Immediately Rabbi Akiba began to argue with himself, saying, 'If a soft thing, like the water, could hew out a hard thing, like the stone, then the words of the Torah, which are as hard as iron, will certainly bore through my heart, which is only flesh and blood!' Then he and his son went and sat before an elementary teacher and Rabbi Akiba said to him, 'Teach me the Torah.' So Rabbi Akiba held one end of the tablet and his son the other end. And the teacher wrote for him 'aleph-beth'—that is, the letters in their regular order—and he learned it. Then he wrote for him 'aleph-taw,'<sup>28</sup> and he learned that also. After that he went and sat alone, asking himself, why was this 'aleph' written? Why was this 'beth' written? So he went on studying until he finished all the Torah."<sup>29</sup>

## III

How did the Jewish elementary school of those days stand with regard to the most important part of school equipment—textbooks? In this matter the Greek school was more advantageously placed than the Jewish school. It is true that in Athens there were no school books as we know them. But the Greek boy could write down literary matter from his master's dictation and so make his own books. In spite of all its inconvenience, this method would not be considered by the modern teacher as entirely devoid of merit. To the Jewish pupil this method was barred. The only book used in the Jewish elementary school was the Hebrew Bible; everything else had to be learned entirely by heart. But the Bible, and especially the Pentateuch, was invested with such sanctity, and the manner of writing it was surrounded with such restrictions, that there was no question of a boy attempting to do it. Books, or rather scrolls, had, therefore, to be bought, whether by the pupils or the teacher it is not easy to say. But the cost was so high that it must have been beyond the reach of large numbers of people. Thus we read of one who lost a scroll of the law which he had bought for a hundred minas—a very large sum however calculated. In his anxiety he walked round and round the temple hill until he was informed that the scroll had been recovered.<sup>30</sup> In the Babylonian communities scrolls were apparently no cheaper. We read, for example, that a stolen scroll was sold for eighty zuzim, the buyer selling it again for one hundred and twenty; or that a thick woollen garment and three single copies of the Psalms, Job, and Proverbs, all old ones, were calculated to be worth five minas.<sup>31</sup>

In these circumstances scrolls were naturally scarce, and this scarcity was a very serious factor affecting every department of the educational life of those days. We shall

see later that the development of methods of teaching was largely conditioned by this factor. Numerous passages bear eloquent testimony, directly and indirectly, to the costliness and scarcity of books. "He who has found books must not use them for the purpose of studying a new passage, nor may someone else study along with him. He may not read a portion and repeat it, nor read a portion and translate . . . and three people may not read together in one volume."<sup>32</sup> It was apparently not unusual for two or three people to study together in one scroll. A scholar of the fourth century, in dealing with this subject, simply explains: "Books are uncommon." "One must not sell a scroll of the Torah except for the purpose of studying or marriage." The verse in Psalm cxii., "His righteousness endureth for ever," is applied by a rabbi of the third century to a man who writes the books of the Bible and lends them to others.<sup>33</sup>

The reverence with which the books of the Bible were treated, and which must have had its effects on the daily work of the school, is vividly shown by the following: "He who sells his scroll of the law, even when he has no need of it, will never see a sign of blessing." "One must not put a scroll of the Torah on his knees . . . nor on a chair . . . but one must hold it in his hands reverently and read it." "One must not sit on a couch when the Book is on it. Once Rabbi Eliezer sat down on a couch on which there was a scroll, so he jumped up as if stung by a snake."<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, we find that the Book of Esther, whose canonicity was considered doubtful at a late period, was treated less respectfully. It was also cheaper and could be written to order for one zuz.<sup>35</sup>

Apart from the complete scrolls of the Pentateuch there were also smaller ones containing only single books. We find also "Books of Haphtaroth," probably consisting of the prophetic portions read in the Synagogue. The former

were not to be used in the Synagogue, but there was no uniform practice as to the latter. Both kinds were very likely used in the school.<sup>36</sup>

As to special books made for the use of children, it is not easy to obtain a clear picture from the conflicting evidence before us. The practice apparently varied in different ages and in different places. Certain portions of the Bible which occupied a prominent place in the liturgy were written out in special scrolls. Thus we read of scrolls containing the three paragraphs of the "Shema": Deuteronomy vi. 4-9, xi. 13-21; Numbers xv. 37-41; and the "Hallel": Psalms cxiii.-cxviii. Their use was not looked upon with favour by the religious leaders of the community. This question was debated in the second century c.e. in Palestine and again in the fourth century in Babylonia. It was evidently a matter which continually thrust itself upon public attention. One may imagine that the teachers, forced by the needs of school work, raised the issue again and again, and compelled the religious leaders to make certain concessions. The prohibition to make these scrolls contained a loophole: one might write out only a portion of a book, if he intended to complete it at another time. There can be little doubt that teachers made use of this provision. One rabbi of the second century c.e. permits the making of such sectional scrolls and marks their limits thus: in Genesis, the first five chapters; in Leviticus, the first eight chapters.<sup>37</sup>

## CHAPTER VI

### THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AT WORK

I.—Pre-school training at home. The age of three was the starting-point for education. The entrance age to the school. The leaving age. Resemblance to Greek practice. II.—School hours. Holidays. The long hours were due to the fact of individual teaching. III.—The teacher's qualifications. Strict supervision by the religious heads of the community. Communal control did not imply comfortable living. The social status of the elementary teacher. The position in Greece and Rome. The different character of Jewish education. The distinction between higher and elementary education. The "sun" and the "stars." The elementary schoolmaster was usually accorded the last place among communal officers.

#### I

BOTH the Bible and the Talmud frequently speak of the moral and religious training given to children in the home. In strictly religious houses this training would begin very early in life—almost at birth. The phrase "A boy who has reached the age of training" is often met with in Talmudic literature, but this, as will be shown later, did not mean a fixed point coinciding with a certain physical age. It was rather an "intelligence age," varying with individual differences and also with the nature of the particular subject for which the training was required.

Even after the school became a popular institution, the religious training given to a child at home included the rudiments of a literary education, except for reading and writing. "When the child begins to speak his father should speak to him in the 'holy tongue' (Hebrew) and teach him the Torah. If he does not speak to him in the 'holy tongue' and teach him the Torah, it is as if he

buries him." "Three years the child is unable to converse, but in the fourth year his father consecrates him to the Torah." And again, "As soon as a child is able to speak his father teaches him the 'Shema' and the Torah and the 'holy tongue'; if he does not do so, it would have been better for him not to have been born." Of the patriarch Abraham we are told in a well-known legend that he recognised his Creator at the age of three.<sup>1</sup> The recurrence in these texts of the "age of three" shows that it was considered the starting-point both for a practical religious training as well as for the beginning of a literary education. It should, however, be noted that the father is generally spoken of as the natural teacher, and that the school is not mentioned.

As to formal education, or the entrance age to the elementary school, there was no strictly uniform practice. In the early period, when the school was an entirely private institution and pupils met in their teacher's house, there could, of course, be no fixed entrance age. Parents would send their children to some teacher if and when convenient by private arrangement. This would depend not only on their inclination, but upon the existing facilities in a given district and, also, upon their ability to pay the required fees. At an important rabbinical synod held in the middle of the second century c.e. it was enacted that "A father should deal patiently with his son up to the age of twelve, after which he should cease to support him." This is interpreted as meaning that up to the age of twelve the father should treat leniently his son's unwillingness to learn; after that age the child must be forced. If this interpretation is correct, it would show that even in observant houses children started their studies at any age up to twelve.<sup>2</sup>

Later on, when the school came to be looked upon as a communal institution and usually met in the Synagogue, the entrance age became more regular, although it was

never rigid: some would send their children when they reached the age of five; others would wait until they were six or seven. This latter entrance age, it may be remembered, is given in the tradition which ascribes the foundation of the elementary school to Joshua ben Gamala. On the other hand, there is the oft-quoted passage in the "Ethics of the Fathers" which states as follows: "At five years, for the Bible; at ten, for the Mishnah; at thirteen, for the observance of commandments; at fifteen, for the Talmud; at eighteen, for marriage."<sup>3</sup> This, however, is not meant to be taken as a regulation, or as a description of existing conditions. It does not offer us a scheme for formal education, but describes what it considers to be the stages of development of a human being from childhood to old age: At five years a child is fit, or ripe, for the study of the Bible; at ten, for the study of the Mishnah, etc.

From the third century C.E. we have the advice given by an educational reformer to a teacher: "Do not admit a child under the age of six; from that age *and onwards* admit him, and cram him like an ox." The same entrance age is recommended a century later by another scholar. This, it may be concluded, was the generally accepted view in the later Talmudic period. In post-Talmudic times the entrance age was gradually lowered, and still later it was not uncommon for a child of four, or even younger, to be sent to school. The reason given was that since Talmudic times abilities deteriorated and it was therefore necessary for children to start earlier.<sup>4</sup>

As to the leaving age there is no direct evidence. It is, however, very likely that it was thirteen, when a lad assumes responsibility for the observance of commandments. Of Jacob and Esau we are told: "All the thirteen years both of them went to school and came back from school; after the age of thirteen one of them went to the 'house of study,' the other to the houses of idolatry."<sup>5</sup>

In the same place we read: "A man should engage himself with his son until the age of thirteen; after that he should say, 'Blessed be He who has absolved me from responsibility for this boy.'"<sup>6</sup> It would seem that at the age of thirteen a boy would leave his elementary school either to engage in some work or to proceed to a higher education. But this would depend on many conditions and, mainly, on the parents' economic position. Thirteen was the leaving age in post-Talmudic times, and is so now for the majority of Jewish children in so far as formal religious education is concerned.

In this connection, too, it is noteworthy, the conditions were very similar to those obtaining in the Greek school. For Greek boys also school life usually began when they were about six years old, the exact age being left to the parents' choice. Before this they learnt in the nursery the various current fables and ballads and the national mythology. Moral training began as soon as the child understood what was said. Among the Greeks, as among the Jews, the economic position of the parents was the determining factor. In a school system which was essentially voluntary, having no other authority behind it but public opinion, and which maintained itself by the fees of the pupils, it could not be otherwise. The sons of rich parents in Athens went to school earliest; their poorer fellow-citizens went later. Again, the poor could not keep their sons at school for a long time as they needed their services at home, and the fees were a burden, so they sent them only when they were old enough to pick up instruction quickly. Whilst the rich, to whom money was no object, sent their boys to school at an age when they could do little more than look on while their elders worked.<sup>7</sup> It should be added that among the Jews of Talmudic times, as probably also amongst the Greeks, there were some who failed to send their children to school altogether, either for

lack of facilities or on account of the "burden" of fees. Communal schools for the poor did not come into existence until post-Talmudic times.

## II

School hours in Talmudic times were long and intervals were apparently unknown—at least for the teacher. Children began their lessons early, at sunrise, or even before, and spent the whole day at school, returning home only in the evening.<sup>8</sup> Thus we read of a question, addressed to a scholar of the third century, whether village children may come to town, for the purpose of attending school, before dawn and return home after dark without danger from evil spirits. His characteristic answer was that he felt sure about their safety in coming to school: the good deed would protect them; but he was doubtful about their going back.<sup>9</sup> Elsewhere we read of a scholar of the fourth century c.e. who used to take his boy to school before he himself had his breakfast; and of another one who did so even before he had arranged his headdress properly.<sup>10</sup> The institution of the pedagogue was unknown among Jews, who would not relegate such an important religious duty as attending to a child's education to a slave, as the Greeks usually did. It was either the father, or more often the mother, who took the boys to school. The practice of studying also during part of the night, which is stated by Maimonides<sup>11</sup> to be the law, may be derived indirectly from certain Talmudic texts which suggest that children began night-study after the fifteenth of Ab—roughly about the middle of August.<sup>12</sup> In later ages it was the general custom for children to remain in school for some hours in the evening during the winter months.

We do not hear directly of any holidays, although it may be assumed that on certain days (such, for instance, as the major festivals, or the fast of the ninth of Ab,

which marks the destruction of the temple) lessons were not given. One modern writer on the subject, after stating that "on Fridays the work done during the week was revised," goes on to say that "vacations occurred on days preceding the Sabbaths, feasts, and holidays, and on fast days," and that "there was also a cessation of instruction on the three days preceding Pentecost, on the half-days of Hanukkah (feast of Dedication), on New Moon, and on the fifteenth of Ab and Shebat."<sup>13</sup> This is quite a respectable list of holidays which would bear comparison with that of some modern schools. It is apparently based on Maimonides and on later custom. But it is misleading to give it as the practice of the school in Talmudic times, for which it is difficult to find any evidence. On the contrary, there is reason for saying that, at least in the earlier period, it was not uncommon for children to receive instruction even on a Friday evening, and also on the Sabbath when the lesson was to consist only of revision. The following incident is significant in this connection. Rav—the famous scholar and educational reformer of the third century—once found a well-known teacher standing in his garden. So he asked him: "Have you broken faith with your pupils?" The answer was: "For thirteen years I have not seen this garden; and even now my mind is with the pupils." The faithful teacher had no respite from his duties.<sup>14</sup>

Long hours for the teachers, if not for the pupils, was the rule of those times, and was probably due to the fact that the teaching was individual and every pupil had to get his turn. In Athens also, according to the laws of Solon, schoolmasters were forbidden to open their schools before sunrise, and were ordered to close them before sunset—that is, the schools were open from dawn to dark. These limits were imposed only because the lawgiver was suspicious of the empty streets and of the darkness. But the

Greek teacher and his pupils were rather more fortunate in the matter of holidays. For although they had no free Saturdays and Sundays, or long vacations, about ninety festival and other state holidays served to break the continuity of instruction.<sup>15</sup>

### III

An unimpeachable moral and religious character was an essential qualification for a teacher. "If the teacher can be compared to an angel of the Lord of Hosts, the Torah may be sought at his mouth; if not, the Torah may not be sought at his mouth." This, it is explained, applies particularly to the elementary teacher.<sup>16</sup> He was further expected to have such zeal and devotion to his duties as to give himself entirely to his pupils, and to possess almost boundless patience. "The impatient man cannot be a teacher," was an accepted rule.<sup>17</sup> He was also to be of a suitable age—that is, not too young—and to be married. A woman was not allowed to engage in teaching.<sup>18</sup> It goes without saying that a good knowledge of the subjects he had to teach was a necessary qualification. And it should be borne in mind that in those times when the Scriptures, the principal subject of the elementary school, had to be taught without the help of a vowel system; and the liturgy, another important subject, was unwritten and in a state of flux, it was by no means an easy matter to acquire this qualification. In Athens, we are told, there was no official or state test of a master's qualifications; each man set up on his private account, and it depended on the reputation he made whether his school was well attended.<sup>19</sup> This would be true also of Palestine in the earlier period. Later on, with the development of public control over education, the teacher was under the strict supervision of the religious heads of the community. He could be dismissed without warning, losing his position, and, presumably, his

livelihood. The waste of children's time through the teacher's neglect of his duty was considered to be an irrecoverable loss. In a late source we are told hyperbolically that to exchange greetings with a teacher is like worshiping idols—as it causes interruption in his work!<sup>20</sup>

But communal control did not apparently imply either a comfortable or even a secure living for the teacher. He was a public servant and a private individual at one and the same time, but only in respect of the disadvantages incidental to both. From certain Talmudic references it may be gathered that he was usually poor enough to be overlooked by the King's tax-collectors. Sometimes he was, or had to be, a man of many parts, combining the offices of preacher, judge, beadle, and teacher.<sup>21</sup>

In Greece the teacher's calling was not such as to give him either dignity or self-respect. To call a man a teacher was almost an insult, and even his own pupils treated him with contempt. In Rome the position was even worse. The teachers of elementary schools were socially despised. Indeed, so many slaves and freed men were employed as teachers that this could not have been otherwise.<sup>22</sup> Now, there was a fundamental difference between the Hellenistic and the Jewish schools. The former was a civil institution in which religion played relatively a minor part. The latter, especially in the later period when it was usually housed in the Synagogue, was essentially a religious institution, the instruction of children being regarded as the most sacred of all commandments. It was a duty which rested primarily on the father, who, in his turn, relegated it to the teacher. In the circumstances, it may be assumed that the Jewish teacher enjoyed a higher social status than his colleagues in Greece or Rome. We shall certainly never find him spoken of in such terms as "abominable schoolmaster, object abhorred alike by boys and girls."<sup>23</sup>

And yet it would be a mistake to jump to the conclusion that his social position was in any way enviable. Talmudic literature abounds in expressions of the deepest respect and veneration for "the teacher." But quite apart from the question how much these reflect real conditions, it must always be remembered that there was a sharp distinction between the sage, the recognised teacher of the "Oral Law," who occupied the highest rungs of the ladder, and his humble colleague at the bottom—the elementary teacher. This distinction existed all over the world from the days of ancient Greece down to modern times. There is no doubt at all that it was very marked also among Jews in Talmudic times.

It is necessary to stress this point because Talmudic texts are so often quoted indiscriminately and thus tend to create an erroneous impression which is not warranted by the available evidence.<sup>24</sup> Here is a typical example of those much-quoted texts. "If a man and his father and his teacher are in captivity, he himself takes precedence over his teacher (for the purpose of being ransomed); his teacher is to be ransomed before his father; but his mother is to take precedence over all. The sage is to be ransomed before the king: if a sage die, we have no other one like him; if a king die, all Israel are fit for the crown."<sup>25</sup> This, and similar passages, reflect the mentality of the Jewish spiritual leaders at a critical period, after the failure of Bar-Kochba's rebellion, when it was a matter of vital necessity to train the people to the view that the Torah was to take the place of the political institutions which had been destroyed, perhaps for ever. They are the expression of an aim or an ideal rather than a statement of existing conditions. But whatever be the view taken of such texts it is quite certain that they contain no reference to the elementary teacher: he is altogether out of place in that picture.

Perhaps the most striking tribute paid to the elementary schoolmaster is the application to him of the verse in Daniel: "And they that turn many to righteousness shall be as the stars for ever and ever." These, we are told, are the teachers of children. But the scholars of the Academy were evidently surprised at the high praise given to those humble followers of the profession. "What kind of teachers?" they ask. And the answer is, "Teachers like Rab Samuel ben Shilath"—that is, one who was a standing example for zeal and devotion. A further question is then asked: "And what about the teachers of the 'Oral Law'?" This is answered by a scholar of the fifth century c.e., who applies to them the verse from Judges, "And they that love Him shall be like the sun when he rises in his might."<sup>26</sup> This is very apt: the difference in regard to social position between the sage and the primary schoolmaster was very much like the difference between the sun and the stars.

In legal discussions the elementary teacher is found among the tradesmen, such as the medical practitioner and the weaver, who are considered to be undesirable neighbours, probably on account of the noise incidental to their professions. This, of course, refers to the earlier period, when children met in the teacher's private house.<sup>27</sup> Later, when the elementary teacher became a kind of public servant, he was usually accorded the last place among communal officers. One late document even goes as far as to charge him with having a childish mind, evidently as a result of continually having to deal with children.<sup>28</sup>

It may be added that in post-Talmudic times the social position of the elementary teacher steadily deteriorated, and in quite recent ages the Hebrew word for teacher—"melammed"—actually became a term of insult, very much as in Greece of old.

PART III  
THE CURRICULUM



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SCOPE OF STUDIES

I.—The scope of studies in the Jewish school of the later Talmudic period. A comparison with the curriculum of the Hellenistic school. II.—Secular subjects. The period before the Roman wars. Children were sometimes sent to non-Jewish teachers. Jewish teachers borrowed from matter and methods of non-Jewish teachers. An example from the Talmudic method of disputation. III.—An important tradition bearing on the question of secular subjects. Before the fall of the state it was customary, among the upper classes, to teach children the Greek language and literature. After the destruction of the second temple education became identified with the study of the Torah alone.

#### I

FOR a variety of reasons it will be convenient to begin the consideration of the curriculum with the later period, when the school was already subject to public control and was generally housed in the Synagogue. The upper limit of this period, as explained elsewhere, may be placed at about the middle of the second century c.e.

The following passage will serve as an introduction to the whole subject.

“The sages said: This foolish man enters a Synagogue and sees people engaged in the study of the Torah. So he asks them: ‘How does one begin to study the Torah?’ And they answer him: ‘First one reads in a scroll’ (the special scroll for children containing the early chapters of Genesis or Leviticus; ‘then in the Book (Pentateuch); after that the Prophets; after that the Writings; when he has finished the Bible, he learns the Talmud.’”

The same order of studies is also found elsewhere: "You had a son, and he learned the Torah—the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Writings; the Mishna, Halacha (the legal part of the Talmud), and Agadah (the homiletic part of the Talmud)."<sup>1</sup>

This, it will be seen, agrees with the outline given in the oft-quoted passage from "the Ethics of the Fathers": "At five, the Bible; at ten, the Mishnah; at fifteen, the Talmud." With the addition of the alphabet and the liturgy, which are apparently taken here for granted, this may be said to represent the full extent of studies in the Jewish school of the later Talmudic period. Indeed, it would be true to say that this curriculum, in its main outline, remained in force in the Jewish school practically down to the end of the eighteenth century, although in later ages the emphasis was shifted from the Bible to the Talmud.

Compared with the curriculum of the elementary Hellenistic school, one misses here not only gymnastics (which after the Maccabean revolt is never heard of again in connection with the school) but also such popular subjects as music and arithmetic. In fact, we have no mention of any secular subjects being taught to children in the period under discussion. There was no room for studies of this kind in the school as then constituted; nor, it would appear, was there any pressing need for them in the life outside the school—at any rate in the Babylonian communities. A knowledge of the language of the country, at least the written language, was uncommon in these communities. Jewish scholars looked down upon that language, denying its originality. It is interesting that the same view is expressed by the rabbis also with regard to Latin. The opening verse of Obadiah, "Thou art greatly despised," is referred to the Romans who "have neither a writing nor a language of their own"—evidently a refer-

ence to Greek influence on the development of Roman culture.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, the Greek language and culture are usually treated with respect.

## II

The exclusion from the school of all secular subjects was a characteristic mark of the period with which we are concerned. As will be shown later, this was a necessary, perhaps inevitable, consequence of the changed political conditions in which the Jewish people found itself after the Roman wars. Before that time education had a wider meaning, and there was a more liberal attitude to non-religious subjects such as were usually designated by the term "Greek wisdom."

Even in that period, it goes without saying that the Bible was the principal subject of study. Furthermore, as will be shown later, children's studies were even in the earliest times closely connected with the Synagogue services, such as they were, and were indeed designed with a view to their active participation in those services. This affords strong evidence of the remarkable influence the Synagogue exercised on the development of Jewish social and cultural life, and also of the view that the origin of the school must be sought in the Synagogue.

Nevertheless, we hear in those times of the practice of sending children to non-Jewish teachers for the purpose of literary instruction, which, of course, could only mean such subjects as the Greek language and literature. This practice was forbidden by the rabbis, but their objection seems to have been directed against the generally undesirable influence of an idolatrous teacher rather than the subject-matter of his teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the expression used to denote education in some

of the earlier texts seems to have been borrowed from a passage in the Bible, where it evidently refers to a foreign language and literature. It is characteristic of the Jewish attitude to education that even for this type of instruction authoritative opinion permitted the father to make the necessary arrangements on the Sabbath day.<sup>4</sup>

We also hear of what were apparently Æsopian fables used to illustrate biblical verses. Out of three hundred only three have survived, and these clearly bear the character of elementary school material.<sup>5</sup> It may be assumed that the Jewish private teacher of those days, even if he did not himself teach the Greek language and literature, borrowed freely from the matter and method of the contemporary Hellenistic school.

The extent of that borrowing may be seen from the enormous number of Greek words, ranging from a "harbour" to such common objects as a "bench," that have found their way into Hebrew. It may be noted here that the method of the Jewish high school, the Talmudic method of disputation, also dates from that early period and owes a great deal to Hellenistic influence. Thus we read, for example, of a famous scholar of the second century c.e., who could effectively argue on both sides of a case, proving "the unclean (ritually) to be clean" and *vice versa*. But this was the method of the Hellenistic rhetorical school, where the students were trained to speak for and against a given proposition. Some of these propositions, suitably translated into Hebrew or Aramaic, would easily pass as of Talmudic origin. It is difficult to avoid the view that this method of study, which degenerated in later generations into a mere hair-splitting casuistry, was greatly stimulated by the example of the Hellenistic school—even if it was not entirely borrowed from there.<sup>6</sup>

## III

The following Talmudic passage is so valuable for our discussion that we shall quote it at length.

“In the war of Titus (65-70 c.e.) it was decreed that no man must teach his son Greek.” On this the question is asked: “But surely this cannot be so! For did not Rabbi say, ‘In Palestine why do we need Syriac? We should use either Hebrew or Greek.’” To this the Talmud replies by making a distinction between the “Greek language” and “Greek wisdom” (or science) and confining the prohibition only to the latter. A further question is then asked: “But is even ‘Greek wisdom’ forbidden? Is not Rabbi Simon the son of Gamaliel reported to have said: ‘There were a thousand children in my father’s family; five hundred of them studied the Torah and five hundred studied “Greek wisdom,” but there remained of them only I here and my cousin in Asia.’” To this the answer is given that the family of Rabban Gamaliel were different from others on account of their being “near to royalty.” Another tradition is then cited stating that the family of Gamaliel were permitted to study “Greek wisdom” because they were near to royalty—that is, had official relations with the Roman authorities.<sup>7</sup>

This discussion throws a useful light on the question of secular subjects in the Jewish school. Before the fall of the state it may be assumed to have been customary, especially among the upper classes, to teach children the Greek language and literature, and perhaps also some other non-religious subjects. This would often be done by non-Jewish teachers. In the economic and social conditions of those times “Greek wisdom” was a necessity—especially for the inhabitants of the larger towns. Then came the disastrous Roman war and the bitter hatreds engendered by it, and an attempt was made to erect a barrier between the

Jews and the Hellenistic world surrounding them, and "Greek wisdom," as representing all secular subjects of study, was put under the ban. Such a ban, in other circumstances, might have had only a temporary effect. But events after 70 C.E., and particularly the defeat of Bar-Kochba in 135, all helped to sharpen the hostility towards everything Hellenistic. All hopes for regaining political independence were apparently shattered for ever. Henceforward, education, the study of the Torah, was to take the place of state and temple, to provide the only outlet for the people's religious, social, and cultural life. More than that: even the past had to be reinterpreted and explained anew in terms of the present. Hence those quaint and fanciful stories about the heroes of old which fill the Talmudic literature. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were given the outlook and even the manners of second-century rabbis, and David was represented as spending his days in the Beth-Hamidrash (house of study) in discussions of the "Oral Law."<sup>8</sup> It was a remarkable, and by no means unsuccessful, effort to preserve the continuity of Jewish history during a period of political and religious upheaval, and it smoothed the transition of the community from a political into a spiritual entity.

It is obvious that in such conditions secular studies could not thrive. Here and there, in the upper classes and among those who had to maintain contact with the Roman authorities, some interest in Hellenistic learning lingered on. But education as a whole grew more and more exclusive in character until it became identified with the study of the Torah alone.

A well-known sage of the second century C.E., so the Talmud relates, was once asked by his nephew whether he might be permitted to learn some "Greek wisdom" seeing that he had already studied the whole of the Torah. By way of answer he was referred to the verse in Joshua:

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night.” “Now,” said the sage, “go and find an hour which is neither day nor night, and study in it ‘Greek wisdom.’”<sup>9</sup> This was the character which Jewish education took on at that period as a result of political circumstances, and which it was to maintain for many centuries to come.

## CHAPTER VIII

### READING—WRITING—ARITHMETIC

I.—Arithmetic was not included in the curriculum of the elementary school in the later Talmudic period; nor was reading, as an independent subject of study, known in that school.

II.—Writing was not an uncommon art in Bible times and in the early post-biblical period. Evidence from the Bible and from early rabbinical literature. In the later period, and especially in Babylonia, writing was uncommon. Evidence from the Talmud. Writing was of little practical use. It was not taught in the elementary school of later times.

### I

THE modern practice of grouping these subjects together—“the three R's”—is followed by many writers on early Jewish education. The general view seems to be that all the three were included in the curriculum of the elementary school, although some doubt is felt with regard to arithmetic.<sup>1</sup>

As will be shown presently, there is little, if any, foundation for this view. On the contrary, one is almost compelled to the conclusion that none of these subjects, in their generally accepted meaning, was taught to children in the later Talmudic period—that is, in the period when it is at all possible to speak of a “school” as an organised, publicly controlled institution. The absence of these subjects from its curriculum is indeed the chief characteristic of the Jewish school, distinguishing it both from the contemporary Hellenistic as well as from the modern school.

First as to arithmetic. It is not, of course, improbable that in the earlier period some children learnt it privately from their Jewish or non-Jewish teachers. But it is diffi-

cult to see on what grounds it should be considered to have been a regular subject of study. The fact that some rabbis used mathematics, along with other sciences, in their discussions can hardly be regarded as sufficient evidence that arithmetic was regularly taught to children of elementary school age. There were mathematicians, scientists, and artists in pre-war Russia when the bulk of the population was illiterate. But there is no trace of other evidence. Both the Greeks and the Romans used finger-reckoning, and, among the latter especially, it became an important subject of instruction in the elementary school. There is at least one reference in rabbinical literature to this form of arithmetic, but its style suggests that it was an uncommon art among Jews, and it is most unlikely that it was taught to children.<sup>2</sup>

When we come to the publicly controlled school of the later period there can be no doubt at all that it had no place for any subject like arithmetic. As was shown above, the aim and purpose of the school, its prevailing temper, was antagonistic to any subject which could not be regarded as of a directly religious nature.

The question of the teaching of reading is dealt with at length in a special chapter. Little therefore need be said here, except, by way of anticipation, to state one conclusion reached there—namely, that reading as an independent subject was unknown in the school of the Talmudic period. In the absence of a vowel system there was no means of teaching it. The children were first taught the alphabet, which consisted of consonants only, *i.e.*, the names, shapes, and function of the letters; from that they were taken straight to the Bible and learned the correct reading of the verses, together with their meaning, the former being largely dependent upon the latter.

## II

In later biblical times writing does not seem to have been an uncommon art. We hear of families amongst whom it was apparently an hereditary profession. Amongst the general population, too, especially the upper classes, it seems to have been sufficiently developed to form a convenient means of communication, or to enable people to write from dictation. The spread of literacy, including both reading and writing, had reached a stage when it could be regarded as a distinguishing mark between people. Although there is no clear evidence on the point, it may be conjectured from indirect biblical references that some boys at least were taught the art of writing, presumably by their parents.<sup>3</sup>

There is no doubt that in the post-biblical, or early Talmudic, period writing became even more common. This is especially true of the Hellenistic times. We read of voluminous correspondence; of shopkeepers writing down their debts on tablets; of all kinds of writing materials, including such a suggestive article as "the common inkpot." The names of these numerous implements are largely borrowed from the Greek, thus showing us how much the spread of the art owed to Hellenistic influence.

The following, evidently dating from an early period, affords us an indirect but all the more valuable light on the subject. "These are trusted to testify when they are grown up concerning what they saw in their childhood. A man is trusted to say: 'This is the handwriting of my father, and this is the handwriting of my teacher, and this is the handwriting of my brother.'"<sup>4</sup> The mention of the teacher should not be overlooked. It goes to support the view that in those circles where boys were given a literary education this would commonly include also writing. It cannot be spoken of as a regular subject at a time when

even a knowledge of reading, which fulfilled a direct religious need, was yet very far from general. It was taught by the father, or by a private teacher, either for general purposes or as a special trade.

On the other hand, there is abundant evidence that in the later period, and especially in Babylonia, writing was uncommon. It was regarded as a specialised art and was not taught in the elementary school. “How many remained of Sennacherib’s army?” the Talmud asks. “Rav (d. 247 c.e.) says, ten; for it is written in Isaiah, ‘And the remnant of the trees of his forest shall be few, and a child shall write them down.’ Now how much can a child write down? Ten.” This is explained to mean that a child could only let fall a drop of ink, and this would resemble in shape the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet of which the numerical value is ten. That is all that a child was expected to be able to do.

From the fourth century c.e. there is a story of a scholar who was urged by some people, against his better judgment, to write a certain document. In order to get rid of them he told his scribe to write out the alphabet. He was apparently sure they would not know the difference. From the same century we read of another scholar, this time in Palestine, who said that if he could find someone to write for him he would send a letter, embodying some point of law, to a colleague of his. This is followed by the question how he could cause such a letter to be written in view of the prohibition of reducing the “Oral Law” to writing.

The following is even more significant. “A scholar must learn three things: writing; the slaughtering of animals (in the Jewish manner); and circumcision.” Another version of the same tradition, dating from the third century c.e., is then cited, which adds to the above three some other things. The divergence is explained by the fact that

the other things "are common" and need no particular mention. Writing, then, was quite clearly uncommon in the third century—at any rate in the Babylonian communities. The scholar, according to the comment of a reliable authority, might need a knowledge of writing for an occasional signature when acting as judge or witness. The general population, apart from the professional scribes or clerks, had little or no use for it. From the middle of the second century education steadily became more general, but at the same time also more narrow in its scope. Religion was becoming co-terminous with life. A time was soon to come when the Jew would treat his home with the sanctity of the Synagogue, and the Synagogue with the familiarity of the home. Education was the instrument which was to achieve this re-evaluation of the social and cultural life in the terms of religion. Whatever did not help the accomplishment of this task was discarded.

The pupil of the Hellenistic school could make his own books by writing from the dictation of his teacher. The Jewish boy was expressly forbidden to write scrolls of the Law. With what reverence the writing of the scrolls was regarded may be seen from the following.

Rabbi Meir, a famous scholar of the second century C.E., relates: "When I came to Rabbi Ishmael to learn the Torah he asked me what was my occupation and I told him I was a writer of scrolls. He then said to me, 'My son, be careful with your work. Should you omit a single letter, or add one, you would destroy the whole world.'" Even for a short quotation from the Bible, consisting of three or four words, the paper, or parchment, had to be ruled in the same manner as for the writing of a scroll.

As to the "Oral Law," the general rule forbade its reduction to writing, although some scholars did apparently possess their private collections of texts. The same prohibition against writing also applied to the liturgy. In

these circumstances it was only natural that the average boy did not learn the art of writing. It became a specialised trade. There were communal scribes, or clerks, for the purpose of dealing with various legal documents. There were also scribes, a kind of secretaries, attached to the heads of the Academies. These were sometimes so expert in all that concerned their profession that even the sages themselves could not hold their own against them. Boys apparently were apprenticed to these scribes in the same manner as to any other tradesmen. But this would be after school age. The elementary school itself in that period did not as a rule teach writing to its pupils.<sup>5</sup>

## CHAPTER IX

### BIBLE—LITURGY—“ORAL LAW”

I.—The close association of the school and the Synagogue. Scriptural readings in the Synagogue. The septennial, the triennial and the annual cycles. The lessons from the Prophets. The Hagiographa. The manner of reading. II.—Bible studies in the school followed the order of the weekly readings in the Synagogue. Children were encouraged to read and translate in public. The Bible syllabus in earlier and in later times. A good knowledge of the Pentateuch was common among children in the later centuries of the Talmudic period. III.—The practice of beginning in school with Leviticus. Suggested reasons for this practice. The assumption that it originated before the fall of the state. Criticism of the current views. The origin must be sought in post-temple times. The practice was a means of securing a place on the curriculum for “the law of the priests” which had gone out of use. IV.—The liturgy occupied a prominent place in the elementary school. The festivals. The “Haggadah” for Passover as a textbook. The “Shema.” The “Hallel” and the “Grace.” Benedictions. The difficulty of acquiring a correct knowledge of the liturgy owing to its fluid form. Children were expected to have a good knowledge of it. The story of the sage and the schoolboy. V.—In the earlier period elementary education did not go beyond the “Written Law.” Later the “Oral Law” began to gain in importance at the expense of the Bible. The difference in this respect between Palestine and Babylonia. Palestinian scholars devoted more attention to the Scriptures to be able to meet the attacks of Christian controversialists. Scholars who taught the Mishnah to their own sons. The elementary school, as a rule, did not teach the “Oral Law.” The teaching of swimming—an echo of Athenian practice. The school’s active part in the development of religious life.

### I

It is easier to determine what the elementary school in the Talmudic period did not teach than to discover what pre-

cisely it did teach. The material from which our evidence is to be drawn consists of a large number of isolated references, mostly indirect and often of doubtful authenticity, scattered throughout rabbinical literature. Without some reliable guiding principle it would indeed be a hopeless task to attempt the construction of a more or less coherent picture out of such material. This guiding principle is to be found in the view, repeatedly stressed by us, that the origin of Jewish education must be sought in the Synagogue, which, as Philo rightly tells us, was from its inception a “house of instruction.” The whole work of education revolved around the Synagogue service, and the Scriptural readings supplied both the content as well as the form of instruction. This is true of the academy for the study of the “Oral Law,” where the rabbis followed the arrangements of the Synagogue readings. It is even more true of elementary education, of which indeed it has remained a fundamental feature down to the present day.<sup>1</sup>

This is not the place for a full discussion of the development of the Jewish liturgy, but it may be assumed that out of the readings of the Law on special occasions, some of which are already mentioned in the Bible, there evolved in the early Synagogue the practice of a weekly reading in which the Pentateuch was completed in seven years. This gradually developed into a triennial, and later still in Babylonia into an annual cycle. There is some evidence that in Babylonia in the third century c.e. such a cycle was already in existence.

In addition to the Pentateuch, lessons from the Prophets were read on Sabbaths and feast-days. These are supposed—but without any actual proof—to have been introduced during the Maccabean times. For our enquiry it is rather an important fact that in these readings all the prophets are represented, with minor exceptions.

Of the Hagiographa only the five Megilloth (scrolls)

were read, each on a certain festival with which, for some reason or another, it had become associated. Of these, Esther was, perhaps, the most popular. But the Psalms have, of course, largely entered into the composition of the prayers.

It should be added that these Bible lessons were not read by an official of the Synagogue, but by members of the congregation, mostly ordinary, though naturally educated, laymen, of whom at least seven were "called up" on the Sabbath and a lesser number on festivals, each one reading his own portion. It is significant that when this practice was discontinued generally in the Middle Ages, it still remained in force for boys "called up" in the Synagogue on reaching their religious majority at thirteen, who, to the present day, are expected to do their own reading. It will be readily seen what a powerful stimulus this custom was for the promotion of literary education.<sup>2</sup>

## II

With these data before us we may be able to conjecture the course of studies of an average Jewish boy in those early times.

He would begin with the alphabet—a difficult subject which would claim much time and attention. From this he would be taken directly to the Pentateuch without any intermediate stage. For this purpose there was a special children's scroll which, in the earlier period, contained the beginning of Genesis up to the story of the Flood. After the destruction of the temple, as will be explained later, this was changed to the first eight chapters of Leviticus, which consist of the "Laws" of the various sacrifices.

There is no means of telling how long this preliminary study would take. The nature of the task, especially when Hebrew was no longer the vernacular, will be more readily

grasped when we remember that the text consisted practically of consonants alone, and that correct reading, although aided by meaning and context, was yet largely a matter of mechanical memory.

After such a training the average boy would be ready to enter upon a more or less regular course of biblical studies, following the order of the weekly reading in the Synagogue. In the early period at any rate this was not a fixed quantity, the length of the portion to be read depending on the individual reader, or on the Synagogue official. And so we are told in an early tradition that “school-children used to arrange the portions and read by the light of a candle” on Friday night. Elsewhere we read of the “hazzan”—something like a modern beadle—who is engaged in “arranging the beginnings of the portions.” The Synagogue itself was sometimes called by a name which had reference to this arrangement of the weekly readings.<sup>3</sup>

Children were encouraged to read and translate in public, especially in the earlier period. In a manner somewhat similar to the modern practice a teacher would privately prepare the boy for the reading of a portion of the Pentateuch, or the lesson from the Prophets. He and the father would then be present in the Synagogue to hear the boy read.<sup>4</sup> A bright boy might even conceive the ambition of reading in public the whole Book of Esther. We actually hear of two such boys in the second century c.e. Later, however, such ambitions were discouraged.<sup>5</sup>

In the early period, when education was a private institution, there could be no uniform beginning age. Yet a boy who would get an education at all would probably commence at the age of five or six. We may assume such a boy to spend a year or so on preliminary studies—the alphabet and the special scroll. After that his lessons would be modelled on the Synagogue scheme for readings

from Scripture, calculated to cover the whole of the Pentateuch in seven years. He would thus complete the "study of the Law" at thirteen—the year in which he attains his religious majority and which would also mark the end of his elementary education. This might be no more than a coincidence, but it fitted in well with the general view that at thirteen a boy became, in his own person, responsible for the observance of the Commandments.<sup>6</sup> The prophetic lessons would be studied at the same time, although there is reason to believe that a good knowledge of the Prophets, even of a book like Isaiah, was in those days not common among children.

Of the books of the "Kethubim" the Psalms and Esther would claim attention on account of their prominence in the Synagogue. The Book of Proverbs, on the other hand, has always been considered to possess special educational value, and there is evidence that it was sometimes studied even before the prophets, at least those of the prophets that were not drawn upon for Synagogue readings. The Book of Job, there is reason to think, was not taught to children, either on account of its difficulty or of its unsuitability.<sup>7</sup>

With the introduction of the triennial, or, as in Babylonia, the annual, cycle, it became more difficult for education to follow the Synagogue. Some schools, to judge from a popular practice of post-Talmudic times, would probably arrange their curriculum on a concentric plan, studying each year a little more of the weekly portion until the whole ground was covered. Others would adopt the simpler plan of working through the books of the Bible in their order. Others still would confine their attention mainly to the "five books." A sage of the fourth century c.e. tells us that it is the father's duty to teach his son the Pentateuch alone.<sup>8</sup>

A good knowledge of this book, at any rate, was very

common amongst children in the later centuries of the Talmudic period. An average boy—that is, “one who is neither clever nor foolish”—was expected to be able to read in a scroll even a word in which the first letter was defaced or rubbed out. And when in the discussions in the academy a pentateuchal verse was quoted by way of proof it was often accompanied by the phrase: “Go and learn it in the elementary school,” or, “Even school-children know it.” And this was by no means a mere phrase<sup>9</sup>

### III

There is one question in connection with our subject which has so far received no satisfactory solution.

From various Talmudic references we know that it was customary for children to begin their study of the Bible with the Book of Leviticus. This became a firmly established practice in post-Talmudic times, and is still followed to a certain extent even in present days.

Educationally considered, one could hardly find a more unsuitable beginning for young children, especially when compared with such a book as Genesis, with its natural appeal to the youthful imagination. It may therefore be taken for granted that there must have been a very strong reason for the introduction of such a practice. But what was that reason? Let us first hear the testimony of the rabbis.

Rabbi Assi—third century c.e.—says: “Why are children made to begin with the ‘law of the priests’ (Leviticus) and are not made to begin with Genesis? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, said, ‘Since the children are pure and the sacrifices are pure, let the pure (children) come and engage in the study of the pure (sacrifices).’”<sup>10</sup>

Now this is on the face of it an after-thought, intended to supply a reason for a custom which had become, or

was becoming, prevalent. It quite obviously holds no water, and with a little ingenuity, of which the rabbis had no lack, no less cogent "reasons" could be discovered why children should begin with almost any other part of the Bible. But the explanations of modern writers are scarcely more satisfactory. Bacher, who like other writers considers the custom to have originated before the destruction of the temple, suggests that it arose in the schools of Jerusalem, where the pupils were priestly children. The teaching of Leviticus was intended as a means of initiating them into priestly life. But even if one could imagine schools of the kind suggested in Jerusalem, for which there is no evidence at all, it would still fail to explain the general acceptance of the custom and its remarkable hold on Jewry throughout the ages. Jewish religious life found its expression mainly in the Synagogue with its various activities. For the communities outside of Jerusalem—and especially for the Diaspora—this must have been so even in temple times. It is most unlikely that parents and teachers would ignore the demands of their immediate environment and teach the children first of all the least suitable part of the Bible because the priests in Jerusalem might find it useful for their sons.

Another recent writer expresses the view that the narrative of Genesis might be considered "as unfitting for the natural innocence and piety of children." But this is an ultra-modern thought which would hardly occur to a Jew of the first or second century. Besides, it would be a reason only for not beginning with Genesis. It does not attempt to explain the preference over all other books given to Leviticus.

Now the difficulty in finding a satisfactory explanation for this custom arises from the assumption that its origin goes back to temple times. Once this assumption is dropped the custom almost explains itself. The first time

we hear of it is in connection with a discussion in the second century C.E. about special scrolls for children. At that time, it seems clear, there was no uniform practice: some began with Genesis, others with Leviticus. All other passages where this custom is mentioned are of a later date.

Its origin must be sought in post-temple times—probably after the defeat of Bar-Kochba. The efforts for the recovery of political independence ended in disaster. With these also went the hope for the rebuilding of the temple. There was the danger that the chapters of the Pentateuch which dealt with the sacrificial ceremonial—now fallen into disuse—might be entirely forgotten. And so children were made to begin their studies with “the law of the priests,” securing for that part of the Bible an honoured place in the religious life of the community. It was one of the numerous practices of a similar kind affecting the religious, social and domestic life of the Jew, that took their rise in the critical days following the disastrous Roman wars.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV

The close connection between education and the Synagogue is shown also by the prominent place given to the liturgy in the elementary school.

It was apparently an ancient custom to explain to the people the observances and ceremonials associated with the various festivals some time before their occurrence. It is probably in this practice that we shall find the origin of the public reading of the Torah at first on festivals and later also on the Sabbaths.<sup>12</sup> Here, too, education followed the methods of the Synagogue. Thus the group of Psalms, called the “Hallel,” which forms the central feature of the liturgy on festivals, was made into a special scroll for the instruction of children. From an early source we know

that young boys could even lead the congregation in the recital of these Psalms.<sup>13</sup> Again, the boy is the central figure in the elaborate home ceremonial on the first night of Passover, which goes back to very early times.

The whole ceremonial is based on the educationally significant verse, as it was later interpreted: "And thou shalt tell thy son." The "Haggadah," as the book containing the service held on that evening is called, may be regarded as one of the oldest textbooks in the world. It is in some way a vague anticipation of the theory underlying the modern "project method." For it is arranged in the form of an anthology giving extracts from biblical and early post-biblical literature, with additions from later times, all organised round the central theme of Passover which has always had a powerful appeal to the Jewish child. There are numerous references in rabbinical literature showing what an important part this festival played in the practical training as well as in the literary education of the boy.<sup>14</sup>

But apart from the festivals, of which Passover is only an outstanding example, the liturgy in general formed an important part of a boy's education. Although in the earlier period it was not considered obligatory for a boy under twelve to recite the "Shema,"<sup>15</sup> yet this was one of the first things he learnt, and it was written out for his benefit on a special scroll. On the other hand, even in those times children were considered to be obliged to read their prayers and the "grace after meals." From an early text we get a glimpse of the time when education was yet very far from general, and when a young boy would read the "grace" for his unlettered father. "Verily," they said, "a son may recite the grace for his father . . . but may a curse come upon him" (the father).<sup>16</sup>

It was not a small matter for a child to know the "grace." Like other prayers and benedictions, it was as

yet in a fluid state. We hear from the third century of a famous scholar who, when he had to lead in the “grace,” was warned beforehand in a delicate manner to make sure of it.<sup>17</sup>

The same was true of the liturgy in general, which was fluid in form largely as a result of the prohibition to reduce it to writing. A correct knowledge of even the shorter benedictions was considered a test of scholarship. “From a man’s benedictions it may be recognised whether he is a scholar or not.”<sup>18</sup>

But children, especially in the later period, were expected to acquire in the school a good knowledge of the ritual of the Synagogue as well as of the home. The spread of literary education was accompanied by a general tendency to assign to the younger boy a more active part in the religious life of the community and to rely on a mental rather than on a physical age of fitness for the performance of observances.<sup>19</sup>

And in a manner which reminds us of Sparta members of the community in general, not to speak of the scholars, considered themselves entitled to examine school-children whenever they thought fit to do so. It can be easily imagined what such public vigilance meant to the teacher. It was an accepted custom to stop a boy and ask him: “Tell me the verse you have learned today”; or, “What did your teacher teach you today?”

Rabbi Ze’era, we are told, when he felt weak from study, used to go and sit by the door of a certain “house of study,” saying to himself: “When the sages will go out or come in, I shall rise before them and so receive a reward from Heaven for honouring scholars.” Once as he sat there a schoolboy came out, so he asked him: “What did your teacher teach you?” The child told him he had learnt that day some benedictions on the eating of vegetables, whereupon the sage entered into a discussion with

the schoolboy trying to prove him wrong. It is rather interesting that the Talmud, in relating the incident, decides for the child.<sup>20</sup>

## V

Little remains to be said of other formal subjects. In the earlier period elementary education did not, it would seem, venture beyond the confines of the "Written Law," which was the only textbook in existence. We hear, for instance, of a rabbi of the second century C.E., who expressed his surprise when a boy of twelve or thirteen showed some acquaintance with a certain traditional law.<sup>21</sup>

Later, however, especially after the redaction of the Mishnah was completed in 200 C.E., it was only natural that the study of the "Oral Law" should gain in importance at the expense of the Bible. A knowledge of the Bible alone would not help one to escape from the stigma of being an "am-haarez"—"ignoramus." Familiarity with the "Oral Law" came to be recognised as the only hallmark of scholarship. It was even possible for a rabbi in those days to be doubtful about the text of the Ten Commandments.<sup>22</sup>

It would seem that in this respect there was a difference between the Babylonian and the Palestinian scholars. The latter had to meet the attacks of Christian controversialists, and therefore found it necessary to devote more attention to the Bible from which both sides drew their arguments.<sup>23</sup>

There are numerous references to scholars, in those later days, who taught Mishnah to their own sons, or sent them to teachers for that purpose. Some prominent rabbis were evidently of the opinion that children should study the Mishnah even before the Prophets. We also hear of a prodigy, of whom every age has its quota, who at six was already studying a difficult tractate of the "Oral Law."<sup>24</sup>

It is, however, quite safe to conclude that these were only exceptions, and that the elementary school did not, as a rule, teach the “Oral Law.” This belonged to the curriculum of higher education, and higher education has always been the privilege of the minority.

The general position may be summed up by the following quotation: “Usually a thousand enter the study of the Bible; of these one hundred proceed to the Mishnah; of these, again, ten go forward to the study of the Talmud; and only one of the whole number attains to the position of a recognised scholar.”<sup>25</sup>

As a curiosity it may be mentioned that according to an anonymous opinion, quoted in an early document, “a father is obliged to teach his son swimming.” There is no evidence from anywhere else that swimming ever formed a regular part of a boy’s education. It is, however, reminiscent of Greek custom. According to tradition there was a law in Athens that every boy should be taught reading, writing, and swimming. Of an utter dunce it used to be said: “He knows neither his letters nor how to swim.” It is not at all unlikely that the Talmudic opinion was an echo of Greek practice.<sup>26</sup>

There is one point which deserves some emphasis before we leave the subject of the literary curriculum. According to the view presented here, the Synagogue was the main factor which determined the scope and the organisation of the studies in the elementary school. It would, however, be a mistake to think that the latter was merely an instrument to carry into effect ideas created outside of it. The function of the school is hardly ever entirely conservative in its character. The need for the training of the young generation supplies a powerful stimulus to the development of social life. The school not only helps to preserve old values, but also to create new ones, thus enriching constantly the life of the community in which it

carries on its work. And this is particularly true of the Jewish school in the period with which we are concerned.

The critical second century was a turning-point in the spiritual no less than in the political history of the Jewish people. The stream of national life, broad and turbulent in the preceding three centuries, could henceforth find only one outlet—religion. Synagogue and “house of study” were to fill the place left empty by the destruction of temple and kingdom. But the fundamental work of remoulding the national character, of reforming the whole outlook of the community, fell chiefly to the elementary school. And even in the development of the purely formal side of religious life the latter played a more active part than appears on the surface. It would not be an exaggeration to say that even in this respect it gave to the Synagogue almost as much as it took from it. Religious thought and practice, both amongst Jews and also amongst others who came under their influence, owe a greater debt to the elementary schoolmaster of Talmudic times than has yet been acknowledged.

PART IV  
THEORY AND METHOD



## CHAPTER X

### THEORY AND PSYCHOLOGY

I.—Rabbinical educational theory. Jewish educational thought approaches nearer to Herbartianism than to other systems. The aim of education; and the means. Illustrations. The place of the teacher. II.—Differences between the two systems. Herbart's system was essentially individualistic. In Jewish education in post-temple times the social aim predominated. Illustrations from rabbinical literature. III.—Rabbinical psychology. Comparison with Herbart's system. The young child. Adolescence. The "evil inclination" and the "good inclination." The emergence of the latter during the period of adolescence. Substantial agreement of rabbinical views with those of modern writers. Hall, Slaughter, and Wheeler on adolescence. IV.—The application of rabbinical psychology. A further comparison with Herbart. The emphasis put by the Jewish teachers on practical religious training. Intelligence tests. The two main forces which combined to shape Jewish educational thought.

#### I<sup>1</sup>

WE now have to enquire into the theoretical principles which served as a basis for the methods of the Jewish school. To attempt the construction of a coherent theory of education out of the casual sayings scattered in rabbinical literature would be an almost hopeless task. Several such attempts have indeed been made, but the results bear little resemblance to what a modern student would understand by a philosophy of education. The most profitable approach seems to be promised by a comparative method—that is, to compare and contrast rabbinical educational thought, or rather snatches of thought, with some well-defined modern theory. The latter will supply the framework around which we may arrange our material

into some form of systematic structure. The theory most suitable for our purpose would seem to be that of Herbart. Jewish educational thought approaches nearer to Herbartianism than to other systems in many important respects.<sup>2</sup>

What is the aim of education? Herbart gives his answer in the opening sentence of "The Esthetic Revelation of the World": "The one and the whole work of education may be summed up in the concept of morality." Man's worth, he tells us elsewhere, does not lie in his knowing but in his willing.<sup>3</sup> The Jewish teacher answers the question in much the same manner. "Not learning but doing is the chief thing," and "he whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom shall endure."<sup>4</sup> The same idea is expressed in an even stronger form by a teacher of the third century c.e.: "He who is engaged in *mere study* is like one who has no god."<sup>5</sup> And of Raba, a great educational reformer of the fourth century, we read: "Raba used to say the end of wisdom is repentance and good deeds."<sup>6</sup> An analysis of the concept of morality would disclose rather interesting differences between the ancient Jewish teacher and the German philosopher of the nineteenth century. But this could hardly affect the conclusion that each of them in his own way regarded the production of "the good man" as the chief business of education.

The next question is: What are the means leading to the achievement of this aim? Herbart's answer may be summed up in one word: knowledge. The human being is more easily approached through his intellect than through his sentiments; instruction is therefore the best means at our disposal. "Educative instruction" is the characteristic feature of the Herbartian theory of education. Without knowledge one cannot be good. "The chief seat of the cultivation of character is in the culture of the circle of thought." "Instruction will form the circle of

thought, and education the character. The last is nothing without the first. Herein is contained the whole sum of my pedagogy." And again: "I have no conception of education without instruction; just as conversely, I do not acknowledge any instruction which does not educate."<sup>7</sup>

The Jewish teacher would go a long way in his agreement with Herbart on this point. There is abundant evidence for this in Talmudic literature, but a few examples must suffice. "Study is great because it leads to action." "The Holy One, blessed be He, has created the 'evil inclination' (appetitive instincts or animal desires), but He created the Torah (knowledge) as an antidote." "There is no remedy against the 'evil inclination' but the study of the Torah."<sup>8</sup>

Among the innumerable variations on this theme one sometimes comes across a passage like the following, which is curiously Herbartian in tone and outlook:

"... If you have a cup full of oil in your hand, and a drop of water falls into it, a drop of oil will be displaced; so if a word of the Torah enters the mind, it displaces an unworthy thought, and *vice versa*."<sup>9</sup> Compare this with Herbart: "*Ignoti nulla cupido!*... The circle of thought contains the store of that which by degrees can mount by the steps of interest to desire, and then by means of action to volition... if inner assurance and the intellectual interests are wanting, *if the store of thought be meagre, the ground lies empty for the animal desires.*"<sup>10</sup>

In Herbart's system the teacher is all-important. He is to supply the instruction which is to form the circle of thought, which in its turn is to serve as the basis of character. Herbartianism has indeed with some justice been characterised as "the schoolmaster come to his own."<sup>11</sup> In Jewish education, too, for a variety of reasons, the teacher is assigned an exalted position. "What the teacher did not teach, the pupil could not know," was accepted as an axiom. "The plastered cistern that never loses a drop"

was the description of an ideal pupil. And a great scholar could boast that he had never taught anything which he had not learned from his teachers.<sup>12</sup>

## II

This coincidence of view between Herbartianism and Jewish educational thought is impressive enough, as far as it goes. On closer analysis, however, it will prove to be merely "skin-deep." For the differences between the two systems are profound, revealing a fundamental divergence in educational outlook.

Herbart's system was essentially individualistic. With him the chief consideration was the perfection of individual character rather than the training for citizenship.<sup>13</sup> With such an end in view, the content of instruction had to be made rich and many-sided. This was also required by his psychological theory of the formative value of instruction. In this, no less than in his influence on method, lies Herbart's importance for the history of education.

Jewish education set out on its long career with a simliar individualistic conception. But this belongs to what may be called its prehistoric period. Then it was the father's business to teach his son his duties to God and man. The community as such had neither control nor responsibility in the matter.

It is not too much to say that had this view prevailed Jewish education would have had no history. Nor perhaps the Jewish people either. But after a leisurely and rather undistinguished existence, during 500 years or so, education was thrown by force of circumstances into a position of enormous importance. The disastrous issue of the Roman wars at the beginning of the present era had deprived the people of their political institutions including the temple—the outward expression of religious and national unity.

Education was called upon to fill the void. The school became the focus of the vital energies of the community, the chief weapon in its fight for existence. Individual perfection was not ignored, but it was overshadowed by the greater need of national preservation. But this broadening of function carried with it a necessary restriction of content. Knowledge was narrowed down in its connotation until it came to be identified with the study of the Torah. Classical culture, "Greek wisdom," as it was called, was put under the ban; it was rigidly kept out of the school. The study of the Torah alone offered a suitable outlet for social activity as well as a promise of survival.

In this light are to be read the eulogies of the study of the Torah of which the rabbis never tired. The following may be taken as examples:

"And yet for all that when they be in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them"—thus the Bible in the name of God. "But what is there left to Israel?" ask the rabbis; "have not all the good gifts been taken from them? It is the book of the Law. But for the existence of this they would not be distinguished from other nations at all." The study of the Torah is greater than the rebuilding of the temple; than the offering of regular sacrifices; than priesthood or kingdom. "Since the destruction of the temple the Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing else in His world but the four cubits of the Law." "School-children are not to be interrupted in their studies even for the sake of rebuilding the temple." "The scholar takes precedence over the King of Israel." "Even a non-Jew who is engaged in the study of the Torah is equal to the High Priest." "Only he who is occupied in the study of the Torah is really free."<sup>14</sup>

Note the regularly recurrent contrast: Temple and Kingdom on the one hand; Torah on the other. This is not accidental, nor is it a striving after literary effect. It

is meant to drive home the idea that the Torah is now to take the place of "all the good gifts"; it is to become the chief content of national life. One cannot fail to hear the people's "will to live" speaking through all this. This "will to live" was the driving force behind the intensive development of the Jewish school from the second century onwards.

### III

The ground has now been sufficiently prepared for the interesting but difficult question: What were the psychological principles underlying the rabbinical theory of education? This is not meant to imply that the rabbis had a scientifically formulated psychological theory. Theirs was a popular psychology, or rather a body of current views and beliefs, based partly on tradition, partly on experience and observation. Foreign ideas, Greek and others, naturally found their way into this psychology and easily merged with it. Nor could there be anything like strict consistency of view, considering the length of the period and the number of scholars concerned.

Nevertheless, it is beyond doubt that there were some fundamental views on the nature of mind, especially that of the child, held commonly among Jewish teachers of those times. The virtual uniformity in the practice of education testifies to a corresponding uniformity of theory. It should be added that this question is of more than merely historical interest. For, in essentials, the Jewish school has shown little change down to most recent times.

Here, too, a comparison with a clear-cut theory like Herbart's seems to offer a promising method of approach. Roughly speaking, the Herbartian theory regards the mind as merely a stage for the interplay of ideas, or "presentations," acquired from without. In itself it can make no contribution to the action of these ideas. It is an unknown

“something” whose function it is not easy to see. “The soul is originally a *tabula rasa* in the most absolute sense, without any form of life or presentation; consequently, there are in it neither primitive ideas, nor any predisposition to form them. All ideas, without exception, are a product of time and experience.”<sup>15</sup> Mind, then, is nothing but what is put into it; or in Dewey’s words: “The furniture of the mind is the mind.” Applied to education it means that “nurture”—the manipulation of environment—becomes all-important; whilst “nature” or native endowment, if not entirely ignored, is at best given only a secondary place.

What were the views of the rabbis on the nature of the mind? It is difficult, if at all possible, to knit their disconnected sayings into a coherent picture. But this much is quite clear: Herbart’s intellectualistic psychology would have been incomprehensible to them. The natural endowment of the human being, his innate tendencies and dispositions, were fully recognised by them and even exaggerated. Like Rousseau, they might also say that “there is no original corruption in the human heart.” The original purity of the soul is repeatedly emphasised by them.<sup>16</sup> But not because it is a “blank sheet” ready to receive any writing that might be put on it. On the contrary, the child was regarded as an active being, endowed from birth, or from conception,<sup>17</sup> with strong instinctive impulses and conative forces, constantly seeking an outlet for his physical energy. Only that these impulses, although they may be “evil,” are not therefore immoral. For, to quote again Rousseau, with whom the Jewish teachers would agree: “As the child is wholly unmoral in his actions, he can do nothing morally wrong.”<sup>18</sup>

The turning-point is reached at the age of thirteen, when the voice of his higher nature is first heard, and nobler impulses begin to make themselves felt in his

actions. This appears clearly enough in the following passage, if sufficient allowance is made for the quaint phraseology in which the ideas are clothed:

“What is the evil inclination (‘yezer ra’)?<sup>19</sup> It is said, the evil inclination is older than the good inclination (‘yezer tov’) by thirteen years. From the mother’s womb it grows up with the man. When he begins to desecrate the Sabbath, it makes no protest . . . to do any wrong deed . . . it makes no protest. After thirteen years the good inclination is born. When he is about to desecrate the Sabbath, it says to him: ‘You idler! Is it not written, ‘They that profane it shall be put to death!’’’<sup>20</sup>

This is quite typical of rabbinical views on the child whose “actions are mostly improper,” and who is always prompted by animal desires. But at thirteen he becomes a man, responsible for his own deeds.<sup>21</sup> One can hear in this passage an echo of the primitive beliefs which invested the critical age of puberty with mysterious importance. Pubertal initiation with its rites and ceremonies was universal among ancient peoples, and in one form or another has survived among many of the civilised nations of today. The “Barmizvah” ceremonial with its modern highly spiritualised content derives from the same source.<sup>22</sup>

But, apart from stylistic crudities, this picture of childhood and adolescence is after all not so very unlike that given us by many modern writers. Thus Rousseau speaks of the child under twelve as being on the level of the savage man, whose only law is natural necessity. And Stanley Hall, the father of the child-study movement, describes the child of this age as “not depraved, but only in a savage or half-animal state.” He has “much selfishness and little sentiment.” He revels in savagery, but “reason, true morality, religion, love, and æsthetic enjoyments are but slightly developed. . . .”

Then comes adolescence, “a marvellous new birth,”

when "powers and faculties, essentially non-existent before, are born . . . the previous religious sentiments are regenerated and some arise for the first time . . . and the ethical life is immensely broadened and deepened. It is the age of sentiment and religion . . . of religious impressibility in general and of conversion in particular."<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Slaughter, following Hall, tells us that "the chief facts illustrating the new orientation of thought and feeling are present in adolescent religion. Religious sentiment is, at least for a time, the dominant one in the youthful character." He speaks not only of an awakening, but of "conversion" as being "the central experience of adolescent religion."<sup>24</sup> Professor Wheeler in her experimental investigations found that "the more usual experience was that of a gradual awakening to spiritual values" rather than a sudden conversion. But she also reaches the conclusion that "the generalisation that an awakening to the spiritual universe is natural to the period of adolescence can be safely drawn"; that "in a society like ours the search for a religion is characteristic of the adolescent."<sup>25</sup>

There seems to be no reason why the phenomena described here should be restricted to a "society like ours." And, as will be seen from the Talmudic passages given before, the Jewish teachers of those times had more than a glimpse of the physiological and psychological crises accompanying the transition from childhood to adolescence.

The "good inclination," so prominent in rabbinical literature and later, like its counterpart, even personified, is not a name for reason or intelligence. "It is the paradox of intelligence," McDougall tells us, "that it directs forces or energies without being itself a force or energy."<sup>26</sup> The rabbis conceived it rather as an impulse or instinctive force. They denote it by the same term as the evil inclination—"yezer." It is at bottom the same as the "self-regarding sentiment" or "the higher social instinct" of modern

psychologists—the growing sense of the unified personality. It is “born” during adolescence, at about the age of thirteen, and begins to fight its battle for the salvation of the youthful soul. It is then that there begins “the quest for sanctity which is perpetually foiled by the bondage of the flesh”; the inner conflict out of which emerges character.

#### IV

The “evil inclination” was not left in unchallenged possession of the child’s soul. Every available means was used to combat it. There was, in the first place, the study of the Torah on which the child entered at the age of five or six. But study, with all its efficacy as a builder of character, was not considered sufficient. In addition there was practice: an intensive system of training in religious observances and in the social customs of the community. In the words of a rabbi of the early second century, “The child was bent like the twig of a vine when it is still soft”—when it easily responds to external pressure.

A further comparison with Herbart at this point is not without interest.

Herbart speaks eloquently of the need of bringing religion early into the child’s life. “Religion will never occupy that tranquil place in the depths of the heart, which it ought to possess, if its fundamental ideas are not among the earliest which belong to recollection—if it is not bound up and blended with all which changing life leaves behind in the centre of the personality.” At the same time he recognises the danger that a human being, by continually fixing his mind on the idea of God “would only deform it—it would be degraded to the common-place, even to the wearisome.” He therefore advises us that “we should keep this idea less active, so that when the man needs it for his safety in the storms of life it is then unspoiled.” “Above

all the mind should keep Sabbath in religion. It should turn to it for rest from all thoughts, desires, cares.”<sup>27</sup>

Jewish education took the opposite line. Its view may be best stated in the words of the Psalmist: “I set the Lord always before me.” The idea of God was not an object for reflection, or even a refuge from worldly cares. It was the active force of a religious system which was co-extensive with life, for the child as well as for the adult. The child was not encouraged to indulge in religious contemplation—he was trained to live his religion. The Sabbath and festivals, the home, the school, and the Synagogue all provided opportunities for his religious experiences and invited his active participation. Religious ceremonial with its rich and colourful symbolism made a powerful appeal to his love for ritual. Much of it was especially designed for this purpose. An outstanding case is the Passover night ceremonial in which the child is assigned a central part. It is due to this, more than to anything else, that this festival has retained its favoured position in Jewish life down to the present day.

There was no fixed age for practical training. It depended upon the nature of the action and upon the mental rather than the physical age of the learner. “The child who has reached the stage of training” is a frequently occurring phrase. But this, as is rightly explained by a later commentator, did not represent a fixed point. It varied with the subject of training. Nor were individual differences ignored. “According to the child’s understanding his father should teach him.” And there was a popular saying that “human minds are as dissimilar as human faces”—which is strangely reminiscent of Locke’s: “Each man’s mind has some peculiarity as well as his face.”<sup>28</sup>

Sometimes an intelligence test was employed to determine the child’s fitness for the performance of a certain religious observance. Thus, in connection with the “grace

after meals," we read: "Abaye and Raba (both children) sat before Rabbah. Said Rabbah to them: 'To whom do we pray?' 'To God,' they answered. 'And where is God?' Raba pointed to the ceiling; Abaye went outside and pointed to the sky. So Rabbah said to them: 'Both of you will be scholars.'"<sup>29</sup>

It may be said in passing that, judging from higher education, the tests were not always of such a simple nature. They sometimes contained the type of "catch" which is favoured also by some modern examiners.

That the age of initiation into religious observances varied with individual intelligence may be seen from the following:

"A child who knows how to shake the 'palm-branch' is obliged to do it." "A child who no more needs his mother (that is, if he does not cry for his mother when he awakes from sleep) is obliged to perform the commandment of sitting in the 'booth'" during the festival of Tabernacles. "A child who is able to speak, his father is to teach him the Torah and the Shema."<sup>30</sup>

In the same way a child who could hold on to his father's hand and walk up from Jerusalem to the temple mount was considered to be obliged to make the pilgrimage. And the school of Shammai, who generally represent the stricter tendency in rabbinical Judaism, would extend this obligation even to a child who could only ride on his father's shoulder.<sup>31</sup> Shammai, the founder of this school, even went to the length of providing that his newborn grandson should fulfil the commandment of dwelling in the "sukkah" (booth)—for which purpose he dug out the ceiling over the bed and covered up the opening with plants.<sup>32</sup>

From the foregoing it will be observed that there were two main forces at work in shaping Jewish educational thought. Social and political conditions, after the destruc-

tion of the second temple, greatly stimulated the intellectualistic tendency. The study of the Torah became the chief expression of national life. But religious requirements, reinforced by the current views on the nature of childhood, demanded attention to practical training. The result was a system of education in which study and practice, learning and doing, received equal emphasis. One was chiefly the responsibility of the school; the other of the home. But there was no sharp delimitation of spheres: father and teacher supplemented each other's efforts in a spirit of eager co-operation. The efficiency of the Jewish school as an instrument for the preservation of communal life was largely due to this successful combination of the intellectual and the practical. It remained a characteristic feature of Jewish education down to the nineteenth century.

## CHAPTER XI

### MEMORY

I.—Memory in modern educational theory. The change of attitude towards the problem of the learning process; a result of the development of psychological theory and of the great expansion of knowledge. The change in the direction of educational aims from the past to the future; the shifting of prominence from the conservative to the creative aim in education. II.—Jewish education in ancient times was mainly concerned with the past. Illustrations from the Talmud. III.—Political conditions forced the people to seek a refuge in the past from a difficult present. The memories of the past were kept alive by a system of ritual and ceremonial. The school's contribution to the development of this system. "Pure" memory and "rote" memory. Quintilian's views on memory. Jewish teachers were aware of the value of logical order and system. Yet Talmudic literature exhibits a "woeful lack of systematic arrangement." IV.—The fundamental fact: Jewish education in Talmudic times was largely a bookless system. The studies in the high school were carried on without the use of written texts. The anxiety for preserving the sacred literature. The dependence upon the teacher. The position in the elementary school. The absence of a vowel system. V.—The Bible identifies the heart with the seat of intellectual powers. Comparison with Plato and Aristotle. Illustrations from the Bible. The Talmudic view of memory. Superstitions about memory. Astonishing feats of memory.

### I

In the following chapters we will deal with the methods of instruction in the early Jewish school. These are grouped together round the central theme of memory, with the exception of the subjects of reading, translation, and discipline, which are treated separately. We have adopted this arrangement because of the predominant place held by memory in classical education. Indeed, this

may be said to form the most striking difference between the ancient and the modern views on method.

The modern educationist uses the term "memory," when he cannot avoid it, almost in an apologetic manner. Even if he is not prepared to follow the behaviourist and banish it out of his dictionary along with other "psychological superstitions," he prefers to treat of the subject indirectly under various disguises. He is afraid of the taint of "faculty psychology," which seems to cling to the very word; and he feels somewhat uneasily that that theory has the knack of "coming in by the window when driven out through the door."

He is, indeed, aware that, no matter what theory of learning he may adopt, the school cannot dispense with memorisation work. But, following Bergson, he is careful to distinguish between "pure" or logical memory, and merely mechanical or "rote" memory. The latter, to be sure, has its uses, and its working demands attention and investigation, but the emphasis must be placed on the former. And the course of "pure" memory is dependent not so much upon such mechanical means as the frequency and recency of the repetition of an act, as upon the strength of the impression left by it, upon the learner's ability to see it in its various relationships, upon the number and nature of the formed associations. "The attitude of the pupil must be: 'I perceive this just as it is and in all its bearings'; not: 'I must remember this.' If the original perception . . . is what it should be—accurate, comprehensive, and independent—memory may be left very largely to take care of itself."<sup>1</sup>

This view of memory, now almost commonplace among educationists, is not to be regarded as entirely, or even largely, the result of the development of psychological theory. Psychology has merely sanctioned that which life has rendered inevitable. The vast expansion of knowledge

in modern times and the bewildering rapidity of its growth have compelled a change of attitude towards the whole problem of the learning process.

In the present conditions of scientific progress it is skills and attitudes and methods that matter rather than the positive quantity of knowledge carried in the mind. Actual information is useful, but it is not nearly so important as the ability to find it when needed. The outstanding characteristic of the New Education—the shifting of the centre of interest from the subject-matter to the learner—derives very largely from the same cause. We no longer attempt “to teach all men all things”; we are content to teach some men how to learn, largely for themselves, a few things. And the measure of a teacher’s success is not the quantity of knowledge imparted to a pupil, but the availability of that knowledge for future use; the power acquired by the pupil as a result of his education to break fresh ground, to face and solve hitherto unencountered problems. Aiming, as he does, not so much at knowledge as at the power resulting from it, the modern educationist need not be a cynic in order to assert that “the value of forgotten knowledge is very great.” The dethronement of memory has been an inevitable incident in the profound change that has taken place in the meaning of education.

No less significant is the change in the direction of educational aims. Not so long ago education was mainly defined in terms of the preservation and transmission of the cultural treasures accumulated in the past. Education was mainly looking backward. Nowadays, whatever the definition of education, the future will occupy an increasingly prominent part in it. It is not so much the achievements of humanity but its unlimited potentialities that compel the attention of the educationist. The creative element is steadily gaining at the expense of the conservative. This is reflected not only in the teacher’s aims but

also in his methods. It is exemplified in such movements as the Heuristic method, the Project method, the Direct method in language teaching, and the Inductive method in grammar. Wherever he can, the modern teacher places his pupil in the position of an explorer who has to blaze his own trail; to discover new worlds, or at least to rediscover the old ones, but as much as possible by his own efforts. In such a scheme of things mechanical memory can play but a minor part. For although indispensable to progress in the future, it is the chief method for the preservation of the past. It is essentially the instrument not of exploration but of tradition.

## II

These views on method would sound very strange, if at all comprehensible, to the Jewish teacher of Talmudic times. If we are to understand his point of view, the first essential is a proper historic perspective. There is no such thing as method in the abstract; it cannot be studied in separation from the content, nor from the aim of education. And these in their turn reflect the religious, social, political, and economic conditions of a given period. Jewish education in Talmudic times, and this is largely true of classical education in general, was concerned with the preservation of that *which is* rather than with striving for that *which might be*. It aimed to perpetuate a system of life the fundamentals of which were supposed to have been fixed for all time. The task of the school consisted in the transmission of the literature in which that system of life was embodied. And that literature, again, had well-defined limits. The principal part of it, the Hebrew Bible, had, in the later Talmudic period at any rate, already reached finality of form. The content of the other part, the "Oral Law," was still in a fluid state. It grew at a

rapid rate and expanded to an enormous extent. And yet its limitations were clearly recognised: the religious and moral fundamental principles which were regarded as unalterable. The intellectual activity of the academies in Talmudic times reminds one of Jeremiah's description of the waves of the sea: "Though they toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over" the boundary set "by a perpetual decree."<sup>2</sup>

An example will make this last point clear. An unnamed scholar of Jamnia is reputed to have been able to adduce 150 arguments to prove that certain reptiles should be considered ceremonially clean—against the explicit statement of the Torah.<sup>3</sup> The point that should be grasped is that even if that scholar were in earnest—which he was not—all his brilliant arguments would shatter themselves in vain against the rock of that biblical statement. And this applies to any other similar statement or even oral tradition. At the most these could be adjusted; they could never be abrogated. It was, in short, a system of culture and education the direction of which was towards the past. From the past it drew its ideals and its inspiration; from there, too, it had to obtain its sanction and justification for whatever adjustments might be forced upon it by changing life.

### III

It is beyond the scope of the present study to enquire into the causes for this particular direction of Jewish education. It will be sufficient to suggest that in the political conditions of Jewish life, almost throughout the period of which we have an historic record, the people were forced to seek a refuge in the past from a present which was all too often intolerable.

Occasionally this flight from the present took an opposite direction and expressed itself in Messianic Utopias, in

dreams of an ideally perfect state in the distant future—the prophetic “latter days.” But even a cursory acquaintance with prophetic writings will show that it is quite incorrect to say, as some writers do,<sup>4</sup> that the Jews, unlike other classical peoples, fixed their “golden era” in the future. On the contrary, the chief content of Jewish culture as well as of Jewish education was tradition, the memories of the past, with the departure from Egypt as its central fact. These memories were kept alive by a system of ritual and ceremonial which in Talmudic times had already achieved an extraordinary richness and variety, hardly paralleled in the history of any other people. Throughout his life, from birth to death, the Jew was surrounded by an endless succession of sign and symbol ceaselessly exhorting him “to remember.”

To the development of this symbolism the school contributed its share, collaborating with the home and the Synagogue in the practical, religious, and moral training of the child.<sup>5</sup> So far it was “pure” memory that was involved: remembering ideas and meanings, the historic and religious significance of the rites and ceremonies into which the child was initiated from his earliest days. But the chief business of the school was with literary education, with the preservation and transmission of the national sacred literature. And here, unlike the practical training, the whole emphasis was laid by the teacher both in elementary and higher education on “rote” memory, assisted by mechanical, too often quite trivial, associations; arbitrary though sometimes ingenious “aids”; but kept going in the main by endless repetition.

Judged by present-day standards these methods would appear to be “cruelly wasteful and educationally detrimental”—to use the expression of a modern writer on the subject of “rote memory.” Even the elementary dictates of common sense seem to have been disregarded—at least

in the higher schools. Thus Quintilian, a contemporary of some of the best-known Talmudic teachers, realises that "the most efficacious and almost the only means" to ensure retentiveness, "except exercise which is the most powerful of all," "are division and arrangement." All parts that cohere together will help to guide the memory. "As we learn by heart verse better than prose, so we learn compact prose better than such as is ill-connected."<sup>6</sup>

The Jewish teachers no doubt knew the value of logical order and systematic arrangement no less than Quintilian, as is evident from numerous references in the Talmud.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the collection of the Talmudic material, its division into volumes and the subdivision of the latter into tractates, chapters, and paragraphs, bears witness not only to the extraordinary industry of those teachers but to an organising ability of a high order. And yet it is quite true, as Strack says,<sup>8</sup> that "within the (Talmudic) tractates there is manifested a woeful lack of systematic arrangement." The order according to subject-matter is departed from in numerous places, and statutes are collected together because they are similar in one respect, although quite dissimilar in others; again, cases are brought together because they refer to the same person, or because they go by the same number, or because the sentences rhyme or follow alphabetical order.<sup>9</sup> The Aristotelian Laws of Association (and there can be little doubt that Jewish teachers had a general acquaintance with them) were stretched to the uttermost degree and made to cover any conceivable connection between things however flimsy or accidental.<sup>10</sup>

#### IV

We shall not be able to understand the cause of this "woeful lack of system" unless we grasp the fundamental fact that we are dealing with what was largely a bookless

education system. For the high school this is almost literally true; even in the elementary school this was the case to a great extent. This was the determining factor which overshadowed all other considerations and made Jewish education different from any other known system.

Whatever view we adopt as to the date of the writing down of the Mishnah,<sup>11</sup> it is certain that in the Talmudic high school the studies and discussions were conducted without the use of written copies to serve as a basis. As to these discussions themselves, they were certainly not reduced to writing until after the close of the Talmudic age. There were scholars whose special function it was to carry in their mind the Mishnaic literature on which all the discussions were based and who were used as a kind of living reference-book. Learning was locked up in the brains of the scholars. It was a time when a famous scholar could boast that "he never said anything he had not heard from his teachers"; and the greatest praise that could be given to a pupil was to call him "a plastered cistern which does not lose a drop."<sup>12</sup> Underlying all their educational activities was the constant anxiety for the preservation of the literature which, especially in post-temple times, came to be regarded as the justification for the people's existence.

It would be a mistake to think that there was any lack of recognition for creative capacity, quickness of perception, or the value of system and method. The ability of logical deduction, of "inferring one proposition from another," was highly valued. The pupil's self-activity was encouraged in various forms. Nor were the teachers unappreciative of the fact that to teach others is a sure means of widening as well as deepening one's own knowledge. "R. Nahman ben Isaac said: 'Why are the words of the Torah compared to a tree, as it is said (Prov. iii. 18), "It is a tree of life to them that take hold of it"? To teach you that just as a small piece of wood sets alight a big one, so do the

small scholars sharpen the great ones. That is why R. Hanina said: "I learnt much from my teachers; still more from my colleagues; but most of all from my pupils." "And again: "Two students who arrange to study together the Holy One, blessed be He, loves them."

The comment of the Talmud on this saying throws a flood of light on the conditions of education in those times: "This applies only to a case where there is no teacher in the town from whom they might learn." This is repeated in other places. "He who studies by himself cannot be compared to him who learns from a teacher." "Provide yourself with a teacher and be quit of doubt." And again, hyperbolically: "He who says something which he has not heard from his teacher causes the Divine Presence to depart from Israel."<sup>13</sup> The dependence upon the teacher was indeed absolute and lasted for many years. "What the teacher did not teach the pupil cannot know" was a popular saying.<sup>14</sup> For what was the use of ability or method when one simply had no material upon which these could be exercised?

Although the preceding discussion deals with higher education, it is in a large measure applicable also to the elementary school. The position there was somewhat different, since the principal subject of study—the Hebrew Bible—was available in writing. But this was not such a great advantage as might appear superficially—quite apart from the fact that books, or rather scrolls, were very scarce and expensive.<sup>15</sup> For in the absence of a vowel system the reading depended upon tradition. It had to be given by the teacher and memorised by the pupil verse by verse. Great care was exercised in the preparation of the scrolls, especially in later times. One tradition tells us that in the times of the second temple there were public officials whose special duty it was to correct or revise books. There is also some indication that special attention was given to

scrolls intended for school use to keep them free from errors.<sup>16</sup> But the fundamental difficulty remained—that of reading a text consisting practically of consonants alone.

And so both in elementary as well as in higher education it was one endless grind. System and method were used for all they were worth, but at best their function could only be of a limited nature where as much, if not more, attention had to be given to verbal form as to ideal content. The full weight was thrown upon mechanical memory, upon the sheer ability of "rote" repetition, which came to be regarded as the chief instrument of literary education. Paraphrasing a saying of Herbart's, one may say that to the Jewish teacher of Talmudic times the one and the whole meaning of method was expressed in one word—"memory."

## V

There is no clear distinction in the Bible between the intellectual and the emotional aspects of consciousness, nor is there anything like strict consistency in connecting the various mental functions with particular organs of the body. But in a general way it may be said that the heart, more often than any other organ, is identified with the seat of intellectual and volitional powers. The brain, it has been rightly remarked, is "a quite neglected organ in Semitic thought."<sup>17</sup>

It may be mentioned that this is in agreement with the view of Aristotle, who also regarded the heart as the central organ of sense and intelligence and rejected the theory of Plato, which assigned these functions to the brain.<sup>18</sup>

It would be idle to seek for a theory of memory in the Bible, or even for any clear statement as to its nature. As might be expected, it was thought to reside in the heart, apparently being regarded as an intellectual, or rather volitional, action. Aristotle also assigned memory to the

heart, but he, like Plato, stresses the distinction, of which the Bible it would seem did not know, between memory, which he does not consider a function of pure intelligence, and reminiscence depending on reasoning.

“Remembering,” or “recalling,” is in the Bible frequently synonymous with “coming up to” or “putting into” the heart. And, conversely, to “forget,” or “be forgotten,” is equivalent to “departing” or “removing” from the heart. “Remember this, and stand fast; bring it to heart, O ye transgressors,” says the “second” Isaiah. So also Jeremiah: “. . . Did not the Lord remember them, and came it not up into his heart?” Similarly, in Deuteronomy the people are warned to take heed “lest they forget the things they had seen and lest they depart from their heart.” And the Psalmist exclaims that he “has been forgotten out of heart like a dead man.”<sup>19</sup>

To make a strong or a permanent impression on the memory is “to write it down on the heart,” or on the “tablet of the heart.” Thus Jeremiah: “The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron . . . it is graven upon the tablet of their heart.” In the “new covenant,” the same prophet tells us, the Law will be put in the people’s inward parts, and “written in their hearts.” This is a favourite expression with the author of the earlier chapters of Proverbs, who enjoins the hearer to write down his wisdom on “the tablet of his heart.” The same idea is implied in the expression “to blot out a memory,” used by various biblical writers: it means wiping off the writing from the tablet of the heart.<sup>20</sup>

It is interesting to note the resemblance of this figure of the “tablet of the heart” to the famous simile by which Plato describes the operation of memory—the block of wax in the mind on which impressions are stamped as if by a seal ring, which differs in size and quality with different people. His other simile, that of the aviary, by which he

illustrates reminiscence as distinct from memory, is found in a somewhat different form in the Talmud, where the student is compared to a hunter who catches birds and breaks their wings one by one so as to secure possession of them.<sup>21</sup>

The Talmudic theory of psychology—and there is not much of it that can be described by this term—follows along traditional biblical lines. The heart is usually, though not always, regarded as the seat of reason and intelligence and, apparently, also of memory. To Quintilian memory was the important faculty on which all knowledge depends and which requires constant cultivation. “What is the only great art of memory? Exercise and labour.” “To learn much by heart . . . is the most efficacious of all methods,” for “nothing is so much strengthened by practice, or weakened by neglect, as memory.” The Jewish teachers of those times treated the matter much in the same way. The chief cure for all the student’s difficulties was “to keep on sitting” at his task. But to them memory was more than a mere faculty. It was a mysterious power, fickle and capricious in its likes and dislikes. It may bestow its favours on the student and so render his work smooth and successful; but it may also withdraw them for any trifling reason.

Good health was a prime condition for good memory. This the Jewish teacher knew as well as Quintilian.<sup>22</sup> But in addition there was a wide range of other things which the former believed could affect memory, especially certain articles of food. Thus eating the heart of an animal was considered detrimental to memory. Memory, it will be remembered, was located in the heart. Food of which a cat or a mouse had eaten was also harmful. The worst of all was to eat olives: it could ruin the result of seventy years’ study. But olive oil has just the reverse effect. Bread baked on coals, or the coals themselves, or a soft

egg without salt were useful means of improving one's powers of memory. These beliefs were derived from current views on dietetics on which the Talmud bestows much attention. "An excellent digestion" is also mentioned by Quintilian as a condition "greatly contributing to successful memory work."

But there were other beliefs which to the modern mind must appear as utterly meaningless. To pass between two women, or between two camels, or to read an inscription on a tomb, or to put one's clothes under one's head at night—these, among other things, were considered in some way to have an adverse effect on memory. These superstitions, to which others were added by later generations, have survived almost down to modern times.<sup>23</sup>

We will be in a better position to understand the conditions which stimulated the growth of these strange beliefs when we realise what astonishing feats of memory were demanded and achieved in those times. Individual cases of extraordinary powers of memory have been known at all times.<sup>24</sup> But the history of education knows no parallel to this collective feat of memory: a whole school system carried on with such little help from the written word. It is a staggering thought that the bulk of Talmudic literature, with its almost incredible diversity and minuteness of detail, was for generations carried in the minds of human beings, and then, from memory, reduced to writing. It is even more amazing to find that people who had such a task on their hands could set for themselves such severe and exacting rules as the following, for example:

"R. Dosetai the son of Jannai said in the name of R. Meir, 'Whoso forgets one word of his study, him the Scripture regards as if he had forfeited his life.'"<sup>25</sup>

To this spirit we owe the preservation not only of Talmudic literature, but also very largely of the Hebrew Bible.

## CHAPTER XII

### MEMORY IN SCHOOL PRACTICE

I.—The method of study for the “Oral Law.” The chief concern was the acquisition of the subject-matter. The method of higher education was also used for the instruction of children. An instructive Talmudic dispute. A comparison with the methods of the classical Greek school. II.—The Talmudic method compared with that of Pestalozzi. Modern views on the subject. The Talmudic method more justified for the Bible than for other subjects of study. The determining factor in the selection of material was not the present interest of the child, but that of the adult community. III.—Memorisation was secured chiefly by means of repetition. The number of repetitions. Plato, Aristotle and Quintilian on memory in childhood. Modern opinion on this subject. The Talmudic view.

#### I

THE method of study for the “Oral Law” is formulated by a famous rabbi and educational reformer of the fourth century in the following words: “One must first learn the text and then enter into the reasoning of it.” That is, first commit the text to memory, and then analyse it and enter into its deeper meanings and implications. The authoritative comment on this passage is important for the understanding of the educational conditions of the period. “One should learn from his teacher until he becomes fluent in the text and its plain meaning. After that he should consider what he has learnt, comparing things to one another, asking questions and answering them. But at first he must not do that, because he will waste time, and the teacher might not be always available. Again, after he has learnt much, he will get a clearer idea of his work and be himself able to smooth over difficulties.”<sup>1</sup>

The chief concern was the acquisition of the subject-matter, for which a student was dependent upon his teacher. Of a certain rabbi we read that at eighteen he knew all the six volumes of the Mishnah and yet was ignorant of a universally recognised rule. Which, the Talmud says, proves that one must first memorise and only then reason it out. In another place the same idea is even more crudely expressed: "One must always go on learning, even though he forgets, and even though he may not understand what his teacher says." The leading scholar of his time, Rav, we are told, had two pupils who were dependent upon him only for the text, but had no need for his explanations.<sup>2</sup>

From an earlier period, it is true, we have the opinion of a great scholar that a teacher must not content himself with making only plain statements, but must show his pupils the reasons for them. This agrees with another statement elsewhere that "he who understands well his subject will not forget it quickly." But this sound advice was not apparently applied to the first steps of learning.<sup>3</sup>

Turning now to elementary education, there is little evidence bearing directly on this question. All the indications, however, point to the fact that the method of higher education was used also in the instruction of children. We read, for example, of an exceptionally bright boy who had memorised a biblical passage but did not know a very popular saying based on an obvious play of words. That boy was "full of questions," but apparently had no means of ventilating them at school.

Elsewhere we read of children given the task to teach one another the Bible, and even the Mishnah, which could hardly mean anything more than the plain reading and memorisation of the text.<sup>4</sup>

Some light is thrown on the question under discussion by the following instructive dispute. If we have to choose

between two elementary teachers, one of whom covers more ground, but the other is more accurate in his work, who is to be given preference? According to one opinion, the former, because "errors will right themselves in time." According to another opinion, the latter, because "errors are ineradicable." The latter view seems to have prevailed. But the very possibility of such a discussion is significant. Quantity was all-important, sometimes even at the expense of accuracy.<sup>5</sup>

We may, then, conclude that the usual practice was to teach the children first the traditional reading of the biblical text and make them commit to memory certain passages. This first step was particularly difficult on account of the absence of a vowel system, and must have therefore claimed most of the available time. The next step was to give a translation, or rather a simple explanation in the vernacular, of the general meaning of the passages studied. This became increasingly necessary in later times, when Hebrew was displaced by Aramaic, and especially in the Babylonian and other communities outside Palestine.

A comparison with the methods of the classical Greek school will not be without interest at this point. There, too, learning by heart was considered to be of the highest educational value. "When the boys knew their letters and were beginning to understand what was written, the masters put beside them on the benches the works of good poets for them to read, and made them learn them by heart. They chose for this purpose books that contained many moral precepts and narratives and praises of the heroes of old, in order that the boy might admire them and imitate them and desire to become such a man himself."<sup>6</sup>

Large quantities of the Iliad and the Odyssey were learnt by heart. We read of a boy whom his father made to

learn all the lines of Homer, "wishing him to grow up into a good man," and who was afterwards able to repeat the whole of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* from memory. "The attention of the boys was not simply concentrated on the difficulties of the Homeric vocabulary. In fact they were little troubled with such points," and were sometimes quite unable to translate some hard words.<sup>7</sup>

The two school systems present striking similarities in their methods. But the Jewish boy had the harder task; he was sometimes made to memorise even the *Mishnah*, which was a much more difficult proposition than Homer. The training value of learning by heart is equally stressed by both. Not that those ancient teachers were entirely unaware of the danger of unassimilated learning, resulting in the production of the "educated fool." The *Talmud* knew this type of scholar and designated him by a significant name—"An ass carrying books." But the great emphasis on memorisation was due in no small degree to the scarcity and expensiveness of books. Furthermore, it should be remembered that with both, the Jews no less than the Greeks, literary education was supplemented by a richly elaborate system of practical training, thus preserving a proper balance between learning and doing.

## II

This method of making children commit to memory imperfectly understood literary matter merits some further consideration, if only for the reason that it persisted in the Jewish school down to quite recent times and has not entirely passed out of practice even at the present day. It may strike the modern teacher as uneducational and unintelligent. It might indeed well be called "cold-storage learning." But before passing a final opinion we may do well to bear in mind that it was a common method in quite

modern times and that something very similar to it was practised by no less a teacher than Pestalozzi. Herbart, in describing his visit to Pestalozzi's school, tells us how he was made to doubt by the practices he had observed there. The subjects of instruction were chosen with little regard to the natural inclination of the children. They were made to memorise isolated names, disconnected sentences and definitions, with a seeming carelessness whether all this was understood by them. He brought his doubts to Pestalozzi, who, in the course of his explanation, led him to the idea that what really matters is that the lesson should be intrinsically comprehensible, rather than that the child should understand at once what he is taught. "Let the lesson give what is comprehensible and set together that which belongs together. Time and opportunity will afterwards supply the concept and will correlate what was set forth together."<sup>8</sup>

Stripped of its technical phraseology, which makes it more palatable to the modern mind, there seems to be little more in all this than the principle formulated sixteen hundred years before by the Jewish teacher in his less polished way: "One must always go on memorising—even if he does not understand what he is doing: mistakes will right themselves in good time."

Moreover, it should be remembered that the Jewish elementary teacher of Talmudic times—as well as his colleague in ancient Greece—was not concerned with isolated sentences, definitions and similar material, but with literary works of great charm and beauty—the Bible—in which form was no less important than content. The pupil would be helped in his studies by context and rhythm, and, in biblical poetry, by the peculiar structure of the verse with its variety of parallelisms. Such literature would, to use Professor Nunn's words, "grow in significance as the years go by and become richer and richer in meaning."

Herbart's comment upon Pestalozzi's explanation is that to a child a word, or a name, is not merely a symbol, but a real thing. That is why he likes to play with the sound, to pronounce the same words with all kinds of modifications. This view has been further developed by Professor Nunn, who sees in the child's love for routine action, for repeating the familiar, a desire for effective self-assertion—a consideration which some modern teachers, in their anxiety to avoid "mechanical" methods, are apt to overlook. The same writer considers it, however, highly doubtful whether this routine tendency may be legitimately exploited as a means of storing the child's mind with literary passages which he cannot be expected to appreciate for several years—unless they have "some intelligible message for him."<sup>9</sup>

Now the Bible is seldom devoid of an "intelligible message" even for young children, provided the teacher, in selecting his material, does not lose sight of their present capacities and inclinations. But whilst in practical training the teachers of the Talmudic period showed a sympathetic understanding of the child's nature which was probably in advance of their time, it is very doubtful whether the same could be said of their treatment of literary education. The structure of the literary curriculum, as has been shown elsewhere, was largely conditioned by the requirements of the Synagogue. One result of this was to impress the child with the worth-whileness of his work; to give him the feeling that he was engaged in an activity which formed part of "real" life. But the other result was that the determining factor in the selection of material was not the present interests of the child, but those of the adult community into which he was being initiated.

Such an attitude in teachers of those early times is hardly to be wondered at. The placing of the centre of interest in the pupil, the chief burthen of Rousseau's

passionate preaching, took a long time before it received general recognition even in theory. When we look back on the history of education we may agree with Dewey that this idea represented "a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical centre was shifted from the earth to the sun." For in this case, too, "the child became the sun round which the appliances of education revolve."<sup>10</sup> This "revolution" has scarcely yet reached its end, but signs are already discernible of the impending reaction.

### III

Memorisation was secured chiefly by means of repetition. "Whoever learns the Torah but does not revise it, is like one who sows but does not reap"<sup>11</sup>—he loses the benefit of his labours. Various passages show us to what lengths this could go in higher education.

From an early period we have a saying that "a teacher should repeat his lesson to a pupil four times." As to the pupil himself we are told that one scholar of the fourth century used to revise his lesson twenty-four times before going to his teacher. Another rabbi of the third century was accustomed to go over his text forty times. These numbers were not arrived at as a result of experimentation; nor were they taken at random. Twenty-four corresponds to the number of books in the Hebrew Bible, according to the Jewish arrangement; forty is the number of days spent by Moses on Mount Sinai.<sup>12</sup> It was apparently believed that there was a particular efficacy in this latter number, for we find many references to it. Thus, for instance, one rabbi who asked for a certain name and was given it, "repeated it forty times and felt as if he had it in his pocket." Another number is given in the following saying, which was popular down to modern times: "He who repeats his lesson one hundred times cannot be compared

to him who repeats it one hundred and one times." Elsewhere there is an obviously exaggerated story of a teacher who repeated a lesson to his pupil four hundred times!<sup>13</sup>

Quintilian believed that "nothing is so much strengthened by practice, or weakened by neglect, as memory"; and that therefore "the only great art of memory is exercise and labour." There is no evidence to show that his Jewish contemporaries regarded exercise as a means of strengthening the powers of memory. They rather acted on the simple idea that the more you repeat a thing the longer you will remember it. They were aware of what the moderns would call the necessity of carrying learning "beyond the threshold of immediate reproduction," but it did not occur to them that there is a saturation-point beyond which repetition cannot be usefully continued unless after an interval.

There is little doubt that the same methods were practised also in the elementary school. Teachers were aware of the child's capacity for mechanical memorisation and made full use of it. Both Plato and Aristotle believed that earliest youth and the latest age are alike lacking in strength of memory; and that "it is as difficult to impress a durable mark on their organs as on running water." But popular opinion never agreed with this view—as far as earliest youth is concerned. The popular view, which held sway in the school down to modern times, is represented by Quintilian, who maintained that "memory not only exists in children, but is at that time of life even most tenacious." Childhood is therefore the time when we should acquire exactness, and when memory should by exercise be brought to such a condition that we may never learn to excuse its failures.

The question whether children memorise more rapidly and successfully than adults is still debated by educationists. Because of his suppleness and his love of repeti-

tion, the child, as was already noted by Rousseau, is undoubtedly at an advantage in "rote" memorisation. On the other hand, it is quite obvious that he cannot compete with the adult whenever logical association is required. In the Jewish school of Talmudic times teachers were mostly concerned with the former kind of memorisation, and great value was naturally attached to what was called the "learning in childhood." The position is well summed up in the advice given to teachers by a leading scholar of those times: "Do not admit a child under six; after that admit him and cram him like an ox."<sup>14</sup>

## CHAPTER XIII

### AIDS TO MEMORY

I.—Methods of memorisation. Brevity. “Multiple stimulation.” The “whole” and the “part” methods. The length of the lesson in higher education; in the elementary school. “Tell me your verse.” II.—Aids to memory. Mnemonics—arbitrary and significant. Reading aloud. Silent reading was discouraged. Modern views on silent reading. Quintilian’s view. Illustrations from rabbinical literature on reading aloud. III.—“Chanting” the Bible lesson. Biblical “accents.” Cantillation. Different chants for the various books of the Bible. Instrumental music was not taught in the Jewish elementary school. The Greek practice. Superiority of the Greek and Jewish methods over modern practice. IV.—Interest. Rav’s rule. Illustration from Maimonides.

#### I

TEACHERS, as may be expected, gave much attention to methods of memorisation. Here and there we find ideas which, in form at least, sound quite modern, although it is difficult to say to what extent these were carried into practice.

Brevity in explanation was insisted on: “One must always teach his pupils in the shortest way.” The reason, of course, is that the pupil will have less to memorise. An even more modern idea is expressed in the following comment on the biblical verse, “That you may look upon it and remember all the Commandments” (Num. xv. 39): “Seeing leads to remembering, and remembering leads to doing.” This is quite clearly a realisation of the advantage of enlisting as many senses as possible—“multiple stimulation,” as the modern psychologist would term it. Perhaps there is also here a glimpse of the fact that there are

various types of memory and that for some the visual sense is the more important. Yet this, even if realised, was seldom acted upon in the school.<sup>1</sup>

Another question which seems to have occupied the mind of the Talmudic teacher was, to use modern terminology, the relative advantages of the "whole" and "part" methods of memorisation. Modern experimental education has given a good deal of attention to this question. Which is the more economical and efficient method: to deal with a poem, or other similar unitary matter, as a whole, repeating it again and again until mastery is attained, or to break it up in small parts and commit these to memory one by one? One recent writer tells us that wherever the material to be dealt with forms a unity, such as a poem for example, experience has shown the former method to be from ten to thirty per cent. more successful.\*<sup>2</sup>

The Talmudic teachers, apparently quite regardless of the nature of the material, considered the "part" method more effective—at least in theory. The question was evidently a "burning" one to judge from the numerous references to it. The student is compared to a hunter catching birds: if he is to secure them, he must break their wings one by one. "He who makes up his learning in large bundles will find that it will dwindle; but if he gathers it up little by little it will increase." "The foolish one says: 'Who can acquire the whole of the Torah?' but the clever one, what does he say? 'I shall learn two laws today and two laws tomorrow until I have mastered the whole of it.'" In practice, it seems, this was not always observed: students know this rule, we are told, but disregard it. Preference for the "part" method, it may be observed, was not confined to Jewish teachers; it was apparently shared also by Quintilian.<sup>3</sup>

\* But see Collins and Drever: "Experimental Psychology," p. 32.

This refers to higher education—that is, to the “Oral Law.” We have some idea of the extent of a lesson there. It was either two or more “laws,” or the smallest subdivisions of a chapter of the Mishnah, as appears from the above texts; or perhaps a whole chapter. The same term—“perek”—stands in Talmudic Hebrew for “chapter” as well as “lesson.” It is therefore suggested with some plausibility that the actual lessons given by Judah the first, the compiler of the Mishnah, to his students were afterwards taken by him as a basis for the subdivision of the tractates into chapters.<sup>4</sup>

As to the elementary school, we have no definite evidence on the question of the extent of the lesson. There are numerous references in Talmudic literature to the practice of stopping a boy and asking him for the verse he had learned that day. This was a typical feature of the Jewish education system and some illustrations of it will be given later. But it obviously cannot mean that one new verse was learned every day, for at this rate a boy would never go through even the Pentateuch alone. The number of verses in the “Five Books” is 5,845. In one place,<sup>5</sup> it is given on the authority of the “West”—that is, Palestine—as 5,848: eight less than in the Psalms, which were also called the “Five Books,” and eight more than in the Chronicles. Now, even if a boy should learn a new verse every day of the year, it would take him about fifteen years to cover the Pentateuch. Besides, he would not be able to keep pace with the reading in the Synagogue, where the Five Books were completed annually or once in three years.<sup>6</sup>

The lesson must have therefore consisted of a much longer portion, the extent of which most probably had a definite relation to the weekly reading in the Synagogue. The children were only asked for any verse which remained in their memory. Or perhaps one verse a day

was memorised, the rest of the passage being studied only for correct reading and the plain meaning.

## II

Various "aids" were employed in the endeavour to secure speedy and reliable memorisation. In the study of the "Oral Law" "mnemonics" figured prominently, especially in the later Talmudic period. These may be divided into "significant," where the mnemonic sentence, or word, expresses an idea with some bearing on the subject under discussion; and "arbitrary"—an artificial word or sentence giving the initial or most characteristic letters of the first words in a series of texts or arguments to be committed to memory. Sometimes the two forms are combined in an ingenious manner. A good example is Maimonides' well-known mnemonic, which consists of two words, each of three letters, giving the initial letters of the names of the six "orders," or volumes, of the Mishnah. The two words form a sentence with a relevant meaning, although of a somewhat forced nature.\* Examples of both forms abound in the Talmud. They date mostly from a late period when the Talmudic material had already reached a more or less regular form. The objection to the writing down of the "Oral Law" did not extend to these "shorthand" notes, and students must have found them indispensable in their efforts to retain in memory the orderly succession of the arguments. This system of mnemonics, of which only a part has been preserved, became even more valuable later when the enormous task was undertaken of reducing the vast mass of traditional literature to written form.<sup>7</sup>

There can be no doubt that mnemonics were employed also in the elementary school, although in a more restricted

\* "ZMN NOT" (Zeman naqat), which may be interpreted: "Time has preserved" the literary works of the past.

form. A well-known Talmudic text gives us a description of an elaborate and highly ingenious mnemonic method of teaching the alphabet. It is also suggested that the Hebrew vowel system—in its nature a system of mnemonics—had its origin in the mnemonic signs devised by the elementary schoolmaster as an “aid” to his pupils.<sup>8</sup>

Another aid, to which the greatest importance was attached, was reading aloud. “Silent reading”—that is, reading for the sole purpose of getting at the thought behind the words—was unknown. It is, of course, quite a new method, and reflects the conditions of a period when education has become universal, and people usually go through large quantities of printed matter in search of news or ideas paying little or no attention to the reading process itself. The present position is well formulated in the words of Montessori: “Reading, if it is to teach the child to receive an idea, should be mental and not vocal.” And again: “Graphic language—the greatest acquisition of civilisation—does not need spoken words. It can only be understood in all its greatness when it is completely isolated from spoken language.”<sup>9</sup> Modern teachers are coming to recognise that oral reading, like writing, is mainly a method of communicating thought *to* others, whilst silent reading is the method of receiving thought *from* others.

But in the period we are concerned with reading did not aim solely or even mainly at “receiving ideas.” The first consideration was the memorisation of literary matter taught for the most part orally. And articulate reading offered an extra mechanical association of the verbal-motor action, of which teachers were only too glad to avail themselves.

The views held on this subject by ancient teachers are well stated by Quintilian. “To learn by heart in silence would be best, if other thoughts did not intrude on the

mind when it is, so to say, at rest, for which reason it requires to be stimulated by the voice, that the memory may be excited by the double duty of speaking and hearing. But the tone of voice ought to be low and rather a kind of murmur."

This would be endorsed by Quintilian's Jewish contemporaries, with one modification: they would insist that reading should not only be articulate, but in a loud voice. To the modern mind this would seem a hindrance rather than a help to the concentration of attention. In those times, however, reliance was placed not so much on attention, or interest, as on the frequency of mechanical repetition.

"R. Ammi says: 'What is the meaning of the verse, "For it is pleasant if thou keep them together with thee, if they be established together upon thy lips"? When are the words of the Torah pleasant? When you keep them within you. And how can you keep them within you? If they are established together upon your lips.'" Beruriah, the wife of R. Meir, famous for her scholarship and cleverness, once found a student who was learning quietly. So she rebuked him and said: "Is it not written, 'Ordered in all and kept'? If the Torah is ordered by the help of all your two hundred and forty-eight limbs, it will be retained; if not, it will not be retained." It will be observed that reading aloud was not enough; the whole body had to be brought into play.

Incidentally, this may throw some light on the practice, still prevalent amongst the students of the Talmud, of swaying to and fro during study. It apparently goes back to a very early time and was originally one of the numerous mechanical aids to memorisation.<sup>10</sup>

"Samuel said to R. Judah, his pupil, 'Bright one! Open your mouth and read so that it may abide with you.'" "R. Eliezer ben Jacob had a pupil who used to study in a

quiet voice. After three years he had forgotten all he had learned." Maimonides, basing himself on these and similar Talmudic passages, puts it down in so many words: "He who learns aloud retains what he has learnt, but he who learns quietly forgets quickly."<sup>11</sup>

There is no doubt at all that the elementary school also used this method of reading aloud. We have references to the "piping voices of children" heard by people outside. We also know that people used to raise objections to the elementary teacher who wished to settle in their neighbourhood, most probably on account of the noise caused by the manner of study. And it should be noted that in early times such objections were sustained by the law, although later this law was explained away.<sup>12</sup>

### III

It is interesting to compare the old Jewish method of reading aloud with the following from a well-known modern teacher of classics. "Only by reading aloud, and in no other manner whatever, can the student receive the author's meaning as he wished it to be received, in his order, with his emphasis, in the mood he wished to call up. Many a point I had missed in reading alone has come out clearly when I heard it read aloud."<sup>13</sup> This, of course, refers to expressive reading of classical poetry, or even prose, where the artistic form is of importance. But the Bible, and also the Mishnah, in the schools of Talmudic times, were not only read with expression; the pupils were actually made to sing, or at any rate to chant, their lessons. Singing, it has been well said, is in its essence a form of beautiful speaking. Biblical poetry—and even prose—with its strongly marked rhythmic structure, with its characteristic parallelisms, lends itself peculiarly well to musical speaking, if not to formal singing. In some passages antiphonal

chanting seems to be demanded by the literary form. Many psalms belong to this category, with the "Hallel"<sup>14</sup> as an outstanding example. Another example is the "Song of Moses," with its vivid rhythms, changing according to mood, which is sometimes chanted antiphonally by the reader and the congregation in the Synagogue of the present day.

The biblical system of "accents" (the graphic symbols indicating the tunes) is of post-Talmudic origin. It was very probably reduced to writing at about the same period as the vowel system. But cantillation had been in use long before that time. From one Talmudic passage it may be inferred that there was in use a system of manual signs to indicate the rise and fall of the voice, and that the right hand was employed for that purpose. We are told on reliable authority that this system of manual signs was used by Palestinian Synagogue "readers" as late as the eleventh century.<sup>15</sup>

It is plausibly suggested that, after being transmitted orally for ages, individual teachers began to introduce graphic symbols into their private scrolls as an aid to their pupils' memory, and this gradually developed into the various systems of accentuation. What was afterwards known as cantillation probably had its origin in free expressive reading for the purpose of bringing out more clearly the meaning of the text. Tradition claims to find a reference to it in the record of the first public reading of the Torah in 444 B.C.E. As a result of liturgical practice the tunes gradually became fixed and he who changed them was said "to bring evil into the world."<sup>16</sup> But the pedagogical value of cantillation was no less important than the liturgical, and so its use was extended to books outside the Bible, such as Ben Sira, and even to the Mishnah. A famous Palestinian scholar of the third century C.E. tells us that "he who reads the Bible without a

tune, or the Mishnah without a chant, of him did Scripture say, ‘And I also have given them statutes that were not good’” (Ezekiel xx. 25). But this was a gradual process and did not become a universal practice until the school had achieved its full development.

It should be pointed out that bringing out the meaning of the text was not the sole purpose of cantillation, as some writers insist.<sup>17</sup> The chant was a valuable mechanical aid which greatly facilitated the fixing in the memory of the text itself. This will go a long way towards explaining the frequent irregularities of accentuation when meaning is apparently sacrificed to purely musical requirements. But these in their turn were subordinate to the need of enabling memory to carry quantities of literary matter with but scanty help from the written word, or even entirely without such help.<sup>18</sup>

Chanting continued to be used in the elementary school for many centuries after the Talmudic period. The children sang their Bible and succeeded in catching something of its spirit, although they often understood but little of its ideas. The chants differed for the various parts of the Bible, and sought to express in some way the fervour and passion of Isaiah, the resignation and despair of a book like Lamentations, as well as the sunny glow pervading the Song of Songs. And the children responded well to the various moods.

The Jewish elementary school did not teach instrumental music—except for the “blowing of the horn,” which children were perhaps taught in the earlier period.<sup>19</sup> But even with this omission there is a rather striking similarity between the practice described in the preceding pages and that of the Greek classical school.

This is how Plato describes the Greek practice: “Then, again, the teachers of the lyre take similar care that their disciple is temperate and gets into no mischief; and when

they have taught him the use of the lyre, they introduce him to the poems of other excellent poets, who are the lyric poets; and these they set to music, and make their harmonies and rhythm quite familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may learn to be more gentle, and harmonious, and rhythmical, and so more fitted for speech and action; for the life of man in every part has need of harmony and rhythm."<sup>20</sup> Music with the Greeks was closely connected with literature. "Instead of being a distinct art . . . it was always subsidiary to the expression of the spirit of their literature." Poetry and music together formed a single art.<sup>21</sup> It may be suggested that although the purely artistic value of music was so much stressed in the Greek school, its function as an aid to memory was not overlooked.

Both the Greek and the Jewish school of Talmudic times paid more attention to expression and intonation—"the vehicles in which . . . meaning, feeling, and emotion are conveyed," "the very life-blood of language"<sup>22</sup>—than many a modern school. W. H. D. Rouse relates how a visitor to his class once exclaimed: "This is the first time I have heard Latin read in anger!" In the teaching of classics—and even of modern languages—grammar until recently ruled supreme. Vocabularies, paradigms, endless grammatical rigmaroles constituted the universally recognised method. Expressive reading was a lost art. This is largely true also of the Hebrew school of recent ages, which was pervaded by a dry linguism, although of a somewhat different kind, as it did not pay much attention to formal grammar. In most modern times, the change over from the logical to the psychological point of view in educational practice, and the emergence of such movements as the "Direct method," have done much to restore expression and intonation to their proper place and to bring back the "voice of song" into language teaching.

But in this respect at all events the ultra-modern methods largely mean a return to the practice which was common in the classical Greek school as well as in the Jewish school of Talmudic times.

#### IV

A few words may be said on the place of interest in the methods of the Talmudic elementary school. There is sufficient evidence to show that teachers generally recognised the desirability of arousing the pupil's interest in his work. The views expressed on this subject sometimes sound quite modern. The second verse of the first Psalm, "But he delights in the law of the Lord," is commented upon thus: "One learns (successfully) only that which his heart desires." Compare this with the following from a modern writer: "Material will not be learned by heart, at least not easily, unless there is a felt need for its memorising."<sup>23</sup> Yet, except in the case of practical religious education, it was rather an interest of an external and artificial character that was sought after. We read, for example, in one place that the wrappers of the scrolls of the Law were provided with bells. The purpose of these, according to an authoritative commentator, was to attract the attention of the children so that they might come to the Synagogue for their lesson.<sup>24</sup> This may be taken as typical of their method as a whole, which in the main relied for its success upon external means, such as rewards and punishments.

There is a saying by Rav, the well-known scholar and educational reformer of the third century c.e., which affords us an insight into their attitude to the question of spontaneous interest and its place in the learning process. "One must always be engaged in the study of the Torah and in the performance of the Commandments, even if it is not for their own sake, for this will lead to an interest in them for their own sake."<sup>25</sup> This was evidently their

established method with children. At first external means were used, such as rewards and punishments, to carry the children over the earlier, less interesting, stages of their work. In this way it was hoped gradually to arouse an interest in the study for its own sake later on, when it will acquire meaning for them.

Maimonides, in the celebrated passage in which he formulates the Creeds, gives the following description of this method: "Imagine a little boy who was brought to the teacher to be taught the Torah. Now, this is the greatest good for him on account of the perfection which he will reach by it; but because of his youth and the immaturity of his reason he does not understand the value of that good. . . . The teacher, who is more perfect than he, will therefore be obliged to induce him to study by things which in his immaturity he likes. He will say to him: 'Read, and I will give you nuts, or figs, or honey.' And so he will try and read—not for the sake of the reading, whose value he does not know, but that he may be given those dainties. And the eating of those dainties is dearer and undoubtedly much better in his view than the reading. He will, therefore, consider study to be a toil and a fatigue; but he will go on with it so that as a result of this toil he may reach his beloved end—a nut, or some honey."<sup>26</sup> This description of method is all the more valuable since it is indirect; the writer does not deal with education, but uses it only as an illustration. It should, however, be pointed out that his list of "inducements" is not complete: punishments played a not less important part than rewards.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TEACHING OF READING

I.—Monroe on the teaching of reading in the Greek school. The peculiar difficulties of Hebrew. Illustration from the Talmud. II.—The teaching of the alphabet. The alphabet as material for moral and religious instruction. III.—The next step after the alphabet. Three methods of teaching reading—the alphabetic, the synthetic and the analytic. Neither of these was available to the Jewish teacher of Talmudic times. Dr. Kennedy's view on the teaching of reading in the early Jewish elementary school. Criticism. The only method possible in the circumstances. IV.—The suitability of some form of this method for the modern Hebrew school. V.—The possible contribution of the Talmudic elementary school to the development of the Hebrew vowel system. Pinsker and Weiss on this subject. Illustration from the Midrash.

#### I

DR. PAUL MONROE says the following of the teaching of reading in the schools of classical Greece.

“. . . In reading there was much more educational value than with us, because of the important training in power of discrimination or in judgment in the use of accent; and, similarly, since the words were written continuously without a break, in the separation of one word from another. Likewise there was no punctuation, so that it was necessary that the child should get the idea in order that the reading might even be intelligible.”<sup>1</sup>

Whether there is any particular educational value, or training in power, in such a study is doubtful. It looks rather like making a virtue out of necessity. It may be mentioned in this connection that similar claims have been put forward at one time or another for almost any subject

whose utility was questioned. Teachers of classics in particular, instead of emphasising the general cultural value of their subject, often fall back on this plea of "mental discipline," and thus expose themselves unnecessarily to the attacks of the psychologist who questions their assumption of the transfer of the effects of training from one subject to another.

At any rate, if the reading of Greek was difficult, the reading of Hebrew in Talmudic times was infinitely more so. The texts consisted practically only of consonants and the vowels had to be supplied mentally by the reader. Of course, the child would be helped by meaning, context and the peculiar rhythmic structure of the biblical verse with its various forms of parallelism. And yet an enormous weight was thrown upon memory. Even with a book in front of him, half his reading would consist of memory work.

A good illustration of the difficulties of the teaching of reading will be found in the legend about David and Joab. A word consisting of three consonants—"נְכָר"—could be read to mean either "the remembrance," or "the males." According to the legend the latter reading was given to Joab by his teacher, and this determined his action in the war with Edom.<sup>2</sup>

## II

The children were naturally taught first of all the alphabet—the names of the letters, their forms, their sounds, and perhaps also their numerical value, seeing that letters were so often used as numbers. The order of the letters was varied in several ways: at first the regular order; then the first and the last, the second and the second last, and so on. It is not quite clear whether this was merely a matter of method or whether the children were also given the form of the alphabet called "Atbash," in which the letters change places as well as powers. Traces of this form are found

already in the Bible.<sup>3</sup> It is not, however, easy to see what use the children could be expected to make of it.

Children have always found the alphabet a difficult subject, and teachers throughout the ages have exercised their brains in the invention of pedagogical devices to make it more attractive. Few children were in the position of that Greek boy for whom his father bought twenty-four slaves, giving to each the name of a letter in the alphabet. A more economical idea was "the ginger-bread method" of a later century. The letters were made of ginger-bread, the child eating those which he could name. Basedow, an enthusiast of this method, urged that every school should have a special school baker. He considered that, in order to learn it, it would not be necessary for any child to eat the alphabet more than three weeks.

It is perhaps not without significance that in artistic Hellas the alphabet was put into verse. This formed a prologue to a kind of spelling drama, or comedy, which was set to music.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, among the more religiously minded Jews of the Talmudic period the alphabet was sometimes used as material for moral and religious instruction. How this was done will be seen from the following passage, which is given here *in extenso* on account of its historical as well as pedagogical value.<sup>5</sup>

"The sages said to R. Joshua ben Levi: 'The children came today to the house of study ("beth-midrash") and said things the like of which had not been said even in the days of Joshua, the son of Nun:

"Aleph, Beth" (א, ב)= "learn understanding."<sup>6</sup>

("Aleph binah" in Hebrew. The actual Hebrew words are given wherever relevant.)

"Gimel, Daleth" (ג, ד)= "deal kindly with the poor."  
("Gemol dallim.")

"Why is the foot of the Gimel stretched forth towards the Daleth?"

“Because it is the way of the charitable man to run after the poor.”

“And why is the foot of the Daleth stretched forth towards the Gimel?”

“That he (the poor) should let himself be found” (by the charitable man without giving him too much trouble).

“And why is the face of the Daleth turned away from the Gimel?”

“Because he is to help him privately so as not to cause him shame.”

“He, Waw” (ה, ה)=“this is the name of the Holy One, blessed be He.”<sup>7</sup>

“Zayin, Heth, Teth, Yod, Kaph, Lamed” (ז, ח, ט, י, כ, ל)=“if you behave like this,<sup>8</sup> the Holy One, blessed be He, will feed (‘Zan’) you; and be gracious (‘han’) to you; and deal well with you (‘metiv’); and give you a heritage (‘yerushah’); and adorn you with a crown (‘kether’) in the world to come (‘leolam haba’).”

“The open Mem and the closed Mem” (מ, מ)=“a saying (‘ma’amar’) which may be revealed, and a saying which is to remain concealed.”<sup>9</sup>

“The bent Nun and the straight Nun” (נ, נ)=“the pious man (‘ne’eman’) is bowed in this world but erect in the world to come.”

“Samekh, ’Ayin” (ס, ע)=“support the poor (‘semokh aniyim’).”<sup>10</sup>

“The bent Pe and the straight Pe” (פ, פ)=“the open mouth (‘peh’) and the shut mouth” (when necessary).

“The bent Sade and the straight Sade” (ש, ש)=“the righteous man (‘saddik’) is bowed in this world, but will be upright in the world to come.”

“Qof” (ק)=“the Holy One (‘Qadosh’).”

“Reš” (ר)=“the wicked (‘rasha’).”

“Why is the face of the Qof turned away from the Reš?”<sup>11</sup>

“The Holy One, blessed be He, says: ‘I cannot look at the wicked.’”

“And why is the crown of the Qof turned towards the Res?”

“The Holy One says: ‘If he repent, I shall adorn him with a crown like mine.’”

“And why is the foot of the Qof suspended?”<sup>12</sup>

“So that if the wicked repent, he may enter” (unto the Holy One).

“Sin” (ש)=“falsehood (‘sheker’).”

“Taw” (ת)=“truth (‘emeth’).”

“Why are the letters of the word denoting ‘falsehood’ near one another, and those denoting ‘truth’ far from one another?”<sup>13</sup>

“Because falsehood is common (near), whereas truth is uncommon” (far to seek).

“And why does ‘falsehood’ stand on one leg, whilst ‘truth’ is broadbased, as if on bricks?”<sup>14</sup>

“Because truth will abide, falsehood will not.”””

An examination of this illuminating passage will show that the lesson (assuming it to represent an actual lesson, or series of lessons) had a threefold objective: the shapes of the letters; their sounds; and, particularly, their names. Some of the mnemonic words are almost identical in their pronunciation with the names of the letters for which they are made to stand;<sup>15</sup> some begin with the respective letters they represent, and are thus helpful in recalling the sound; others, again, have the peculiarities of their shapes skilfully brought out through the medium of the moral sayings for which they serve as symbols. It may be said that this method of teaching the alphabet is in many respects superior to the contrivances used for the same purpose by some modern teachers.

It is necessary, however, to point out that this must not be taken (as is done by some writers) to have been the usual

method of teaching the alphabet.<sup>16</sup> It is not impossible that it represents a homily, delivered in the Synagogue to an adult audience. The alphabet has always been a favourite subject with the preacher as well as with the mystic. But even if used in a school, it was by no means a common method. In the first place, it implies Hebrew as the vernacular of the children, which was not the case in Babylonia, nor even in Palestine in the later Talmudic period. Besides, the introduction—"The children said things which had never been said before"—shows quite clearly that it was the work of a particular teacher—or preacher—with an inventive turn of mind. It was not known before him; nor, as far as the evidence goes, was it commonly used after him.<sup>17</sup>

### III

But the alphabet was only the first step. What was the next? We know what it was in Greece, for instance. This is how it is described. "First we learn the names of the letters . . . then their several forms and values, then syllables and their modifications, and finally nouns and verbs and connecting particles, and the changes they undergo. Then we begin to read and to write, at first syllable by syllable, very slowly, and then more rapidly, as we acquire some familiarity."<sup>18</sup>

This is in the main the time-honoured alphabetic method of teaching reading. It was current in the world's schools from the days of classical Greece down to almost our own times. Practically all teachers are now agreed that it was a method which never taught anybody to read: the children, as one writer aptly puts it, "learning in spite of it."<sup>19</sup>

In the latter half of the nineteenth century it began to be displaced by the phonic, or phonetic, method. This was by no means a new discovery. It originated in the sixteenth century, and both Rousseau and Pestalozzi, not to mention

others, were among its elaborators. But it found wide recognition only in recent times. It is a synthetic method, and the procedure is still from the part to the whole. Instead of the names, the sound values of the letters are given; these are combined into syllables; then into words, connected phrases, and so on.

At about the same time, there came into use the analytic method, which follows the principle of going from the whole to the part, and lays particular stress on the thought-element in reading. What that whole is to be there is considerable divergence of opinion. Some take the word as the unit; others begin with the phrase; still others with the sentence, or even the connected passage. Only after the children have acquired a sufficiently large vocabulary, which they can recognise and read at sight, is the work of analysis begun: the words are broken up into their component phonograms, and these are used for the formation of new words.<sup>20</sup>

We shall now be able to see our problem more clearly. The Jewish teacher of Talmudic times could use none of the methods described here. The Hebrew he taught had no established vowel system. It was therefore equally impossible for him to go either from the part to the whole or from the whole to the part. In fact, no known method would do for his case.

A. R. S. Kennedy, perhaps the only writer who touches upon this question, suggests that after the alphabet "the teacher copied a verse which the child had already mastered by heart, and taught him to identify the individual words."<sup>21</sup>

It is necessary to point out at once, before entering into pedagogical considerations, that there is no evidence—at any rate, as far as the writer is aware—supporting this suggestion. Such a method is nowhere mentioned, and for very good reasons, as will be seen presently. As to the

implication that children were made to memorise verses—presumably biblical—before they read them in the book, this is contrary to all that is known of the practice of the school. The elementary teacher is called “he who makes the children read,” in contrast with the teacher of the Mishnah, who is called “he who teaches off by heart.”<sup>22</sup> The common practice seems to have been for the children first to read in their books, and then to memorise at least one verse a day. To this there were apparently two exceptions: Deuteronomy vi. 4 and xxxiii. 4. These verses the child was taught as soon as he began to speak, but by the father at home—a custom which has survived to the present day.<sup>23</sup>

But quite apart from this, the method suggested by Dr. Kennedy would be impracticable for religious reasons. There was no other material from which the verses could be taken except the Bible. The liturgy was not to be reduced to writing, and the prohibition applied also to the “Oral Law.” But the writing of biblical verses—and a great many would be required if any results were to be accomplished—was surrounded with so many restrictions that the teacher would find it of no practical use.<sup>24</sup>

Nor was the reading of individual words, from a religious point of view, such a simple matter as it appears on the surface. In the Synagogue it was considered doubtful whether one reader might stop in the middle of a verse and another continue from that place. A significant concession was made in this respect for children. R. Hanina Qara says: “I had much trouble with R. Hanina the Great, but he did not permit stopping in the middle of a verse, except for children, since they do it for practice.”<sup>25</sup> This concession, it will be observed, only went as far as stopping in the middle of the verse: there could be no question of resolving it into single words.

But even if all the religious objections were disregarded,

this method must be rejected on pedagogical grounds. Nothing of any value could be achieved by it. It would be, in fact, not a solution but an aggravation of the difficulty.

The word cannot be successfully used as a reading unit unless—as in the analytic method—after being taught as a whole it is resolved into its component sounds or phonograms. But in Hebrew this analysis could not be done because of the lack of vowel signs. To break up a Hebrew word would not mean to take it to pieces, which could then be recombined in a different way, but simply to destroy its value as reading material. The word therefore had to be taken as a whole. But the same group of consonants which the boy would be taught to read as a certain word in one verse would be read in a totally different manner in another verse.

One illustration will suffice. The three consonants, ב ג ד, may be read in eight or nine different ways, according to the vowels with which they are combined.<sup>26</sup> This is true, although not always in the same degree, of almost any other three compatible consonants; and—of course to a much smaller extent—also of groups of two letters. From the point of view of the mechanics of reading, words such as these are like blank cheques. What is to be written on them can be determined only from a meaningful context. Separated from it, their whole value is lost.

Now, what could a teacher do with such material? There can be little doubt as to what method he would use. He would not attempt the impossible: teaching single words. More than that: reading as a subject for itself, independent of a particular text, did not exist for him at all; there was no means of teaching it. In fact, it is nowhere mentioned. Reading in those times always meant the reading of a special book—the only book available, the Bible.<sup>27</sup> Writers who speak of “reading” as a separate subject—some even speak of “reading, writing, and arithmetic” (the three R’s)

—are projecting the conditions of their own time into the school of the Talmudic period. Reading did not emerge as a separate subject until the vowel system was evolved, that is, some centuries after the period with which this chapter is concerned.

#### IV

In the schools of Talmudic times the children were first taught the alphabet, after which they were taken straight to the Bible, where they were trained to read a verse as a whole. The longer verses were sometimes divided into two parts. The manner of reading had to be memorised, but in this the children were greatly helped by meaning and context. Of all the known methods this comes nearest to that form of the analytic which teaches the child to recognise at sight a sentence as a whole, and stresses the importance of context and thought element. It was thus to some extent an anticipation of one of the most modern methods of the teaching of reading, but, it should be remembered, from necessity and not from choice. Also it was an analytic method minus the analysis; that could not be done in the absence of vowel signs.

Intensive practice and constant revision were essential with such a method, and it was always necessary to be on guard against the tricks of memory. The following incident is instructive in this respect. A great scholar, who had given up study for a time, came to a certain Synagogue and was called up to read a portion of the Law. The passage happened to be Exodus xii., in which the second verse begins with the words: "This month shall be unto you." But he was out of practice, and the words were misread by him to mean: "Is their heart deaf?"<sup>28</sup>

It may be noted here that the analytic method, in some form or another, would be more suited to the peculiarities of the Hebrew language than the phonic method which is

at present in general use in the Jewish elementary school. It is computed that the thirteen English vowels have between them one hundred and four sounds, and that fourteen per cent. of English words are unphonetic.<sup>29</sup> Hebrew cannot boast of quite such a record, and yet it is, in its own way, as unphonetic as English. Instead of the same letter changing its sound under the influence of the context, two, or even three, letters may have the same sound. This peculiarity of Hebrew gave trouble already in Talmudic times.<sup>30</sup> In the present state of Hebrew phonetics there are thirteen letters each of which shares its function with some other one.<sup>31</sup> This naturally leads to trouble in the teaching of reading, and, particularly, spelling.

Another peculiarity is that the vowels are not, as in other languages, found in the same line with the consonants, but more usually beneath them. This necessitates, especially in the initial stages, two different eye movements, vertical and horizontal, and obstructs the acquisition of that smooth movement of the eye along the line which is the chief condition for good reading. There are also other difficulties which cannot be discussed here.<sup>32</sup> A radical solution for all these problems would be the adoption of some form of the analytic method which would train the child to the recognition at sight of the sentence, or at least the word, as a whole, the analysis to follow after. This method would be especially suitable for Palestine where Hebrew is the children's vernacular.

## V

There is one other matter which may be noticed in connection with the subject of this chapter. The evolution of the Hebrew vowel system, or rather systems, was a long and slow process which was not completed until about the eighth century c.e. It is a work of great complexity in which many people in different places collaborated. To

the patient labours of these people we largely owe the preservation of the Bible.

Now the question naturally arises: What part did the school play in this effort?

The suggestion was made long ago by S. Pinsker, and supported afterwards by I. H. Weiss and others, that the elaborate vowel system which we have in our possession took its rise in the elementary school.<sup>33</sup> It is a plausible idea which well deserves consideration. The absence of vowels affected the teacher's work more seriously than that of any other person. For he, it should be remembered, was expected to teach little children such difficult books as the Pentateuch or the Psalms. For a modern English teacher to realise what that meant he would have to imagine himself obliged to teach children of six or seven such a book as Chaucer, for instance, out of a text consisting practically of consonants alone. Such a teacher would be an extraordinarily dull person if he did not contrive some means to remedy a defect which made his position almost intolerable.

There is a Midrashic passage which affords us a glimpse of the difficulties which the children usually experienced. The functions of the four vowel letters (א, ע, ו, י) were not quite fixed, nor was their use uniform. Nevertheless the children would come to associate these letters with the particular sounds for which they stood most frequently. Thus, for instance, the sound "o" would become associated with the "Waw" and the sound "e" with the "Yod." In the absence of these letters their corresponding sounds would not readily occur to the mind, but rather some different sounds not usually associated with them. So the Midrash tells us the children would read "Masheh" for "Mosheh" (Moses), "Aharan" for "Aharon" (Aaron), and "Ephran" for "Ephron," because in all these words the vowel letter "Waw" is missing.<sup>34</sup> Now the teacher, to help them

along, would introduce, in his private scroll, a small "Waw" into these words to indicate the missing letter. This small letter would gradually be contracted into a symbolic dot—the defective "o." Similarly a missing "Yod" would be indicated by a small letter, later on contracted to a dot, and placed beneath the consonant—the defective, or short "e." From these beginnings, consisting originally of a small letter, a dot, or a stroke here and there, there gradually developed that imposing and complicated system which stands as a monument to the industry and ingenuity of the ancient Hebrew grammarians. If there is any foundation for this idea, the elementary teacher of Talmudic times would deserve well of all those who value the Bible for religious, historic, or literary reasons.

## CHAPTER XV

### TRANSLATION

I.—Translation as a method of language instruction originated in the early Jewish school. The Jewish method of translation of the present day has behind it a tradition of twenty-five hundred years. II.—The method of translation in the early school was similar to that of the Synagogue. Translation in the Synagogue was not a complete rendering, but rather an explanation. Reasons for this practice. The translation was recited from memory and not from a written text. Reasons for this. The unit for translation was one or more whole verses. The method compared with modern practice. III.—The deterioration of the method of translation in post-Talmudic ages. Modern controversies about methods of language teaching. The objections to translation are less applicable to the ancient Jewish than to the more modern forms of the method.

#### I

THE complex historical problems of the origin and development of the various translations of the Bible are outside the scope of this work. There is a considerable literature on the subject to which the interested reader may be referred.<sup>1</sup> Here we are concerned only with the educational aspect of the question, which has so far received little, if any, attention.

The subject cannot fail to prove of some interest to the student of the history of educational method and, particularly, to the language teacher. For translation as a method of instruction originated in the Jewish school, as a result of peculiar historical conditions, some centuries before the current era. In those early days it was used for the instruction of adults in connection with the Synagogue service in which the Scripture lesson formed the central part. The

elementary school, which came into being later, had found this method already well established and adapted it to its own requirements. The method of translation, which is still employed in most Jewish schools outside Palestine at the present day, has therefore a tradition of some twenty-five centuries behind it. During this long period the Jewish people has spread into almost every corner of the globe, and has as a result changed its vernacular again and again. But the method stood the test of time, displaying something of the adaptability characteristic of the people amongst whom it arose. At the present day Hebrew is translated by the Jewish teacher into every European and many non-European languages. Here and there the "Direct method" has been introduced, as in the non-Jewish school; but nowhere, outside Palestine, has it succeeded in completely dislodging translation from its recognised position as the chief means of instruction in the Hebrew class.

## II

There can be no doubt at all that the pupils of the Jewish elementary school in Talmudic times, both in Babylonia as well as Palestine, were given an Aramaic translation of their lessons from the Bible. Similarly, in the communities where Greek was the spoken language among the Jews, such as Egypt, these lessons were translated into Greek. It may indeed be suggested that the Septuagint, like the Aramaic translations, was intended to meet the requirements of the school no less than those of the Synagogue.

Our sources supply us with no direct information on this subject. We know, however, from the Mishnah that minors—that is, children under thirteen—used to read and translate the lesson from the Scripture in the Synagogue, and that they were prepared for this by their teachers.<sup>2</sup> This, together with the fact, established in an earlier part

of this work, that the service of the Synagogue formed the central feature of the curriculum of the school, entitles us to the assumption that the same method, except perhaps for minor differences, was followed in both institutions.

What was the nature of that method, its essential characteristics? What was it intended to achieve, and how did it work in practice? Finally, how does it compare with modern methods of language teaching?

To be able to answer these questions satisfactorily we have to bear in mind the following considerations. The lesson from Scripture in the early Synagogue had a definitely practical aim: to give the people guidance in religious, especially in ceremonial, matters. Education as a permanent institution with no direct relation to immediate needs did not arise until much later. And it took many centuries before Jewish teachers reached the idea of "study for its own sake"—a peculiarly Jewish idea which dominated the school down to the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup>

The earliest reference to such a Scripture lesson read in public is found in the well-known passage in Nehemiah, chapter viii. There we are told that as the result of such a reading the people made booths and dwelt in them, in celebration of the festival of Tabernacles—something which "they had not done since the days of Joshua the son of Nun." With such an end in view it was ideal content that mattered rather than verbal form. The reader's, or the teacher's, concern was to extract the thought from a given passage; he was content to leave the words to take care of themselves.

Another important influence which tended in the same direction arose from the fact that when the synagogue readings were instituted Hebrew was still the language commonly spoken among the people. There had, however, already begun that transitional stage during which in the learned circles the classical Hebrew of the Scrip-

tures developed into the Neo-Hebrew of the Mishnah; whilst among the people in general Aramaic was gradually establishing itself as the vernacular. Many of the biblical passages which had a practical bearing on questions of ritual and ceremonial were no longer understood in their original form by the mass of the people. They had become archaic, or had acquired a different meaning as a result of the development of tradition. The teacher's task was therefore not to translate (which, in the circumstances, would have been of little use), but rather to paraphrase and explain the difficult phrases and expressions and, in general, to supply a running commentary to the passages in question. It was in the nature of a literature lesson as given in the modern school. So we find that the earliest name of the professional teacher, as distinct from the priest to whom people came for occasional advice, was "one who explains," or "one who causes to understand."<sup>4</sup> A good illustration of this method of teaching we find in the chapter of Nehemiah referred to above. Verse eight, which some commentators consider obscure, may be translated as follows: "And they read in the book, in the Torah of God, explaining it and giving the meaning, and they made (the people) understand the reading."<sup>5</sup> This is as good a description as can be given of the then current method.

In its earliest form, therefore, the translation of the Scripture lesson in the Synagogue was not a complete rendering into any other language, but rather an explanation of difficult phrases or expressions. But in the meantime the Synagogue service was becoming stereotyped, while, on the other hand, Aramaic supplanted Hebrew as the people's vernacular. As a result the earlier explanation developed either into a literal translation or into a free and loose exposition. Authoritative opinion refused to sanction either of these extremes and insisted on the original

method. Thus a well-known teacher of the second century gives it as his view that “he who translates a verse literally is a liar; and he who adds to it is a blasphemer.”<sup>6</sup> The desirable method is neither what the modern teacher would call a mechanical “transverbalisation” nor yet a fanciful exposition, but a rendering according to the sense.

Another feature worthy of notice is that the translation in the Synagogue had to be recited from memory and not from a written text. The reason usually given is that a proper distinction should be preserved between the original of the Bible and the Aramaic version. But another reason may be suggested: to prevent the translation becoming fixed and frozen, as it were, and so ceasing to be an explanation as originally intended. It is for the same reason that the modern school puts a ban on so-called “cribs.”

The unit of translation in the Synagogue was one whole verse for the Pentateuch; but two or three verses from the Prophets might be taken at once.<sup>7</sup> This is a rather more important matter than appears on the surface. Although it cannot be said that in determining the unit of translation pedagogical considerations alone were taken into account,<sup>8</sup> yet this method is in agreement with modern scientific opinion. Most language teachers now accept the view that the isolated word is neither a unit of speech nor a unit of thought, but merely a lexicographical unit which may have its legitimate place in the dictionary. Some, like Gentile, for instance, would leave no room for it even there. It receives its meaning and particular colouring from its place in a connected context—the sentence. But the sentence is not just the sum total of its constituent words. There is something more: the relation and connection of these words, their order and arrangement. But it is this “something more,” which expresses what is usually called the “genius of the language,” that is likely to escape the learner, unless a passage, or at least the sentence, be taken

as a connected whole. All this, it may be added, is even more true of Hebrew than of other languages, on account of the symmetric structure of its sentence and the remarkable flexibility of its word order.

It is interesting to find that Quintilian shared the view of his contemporary Jewish teachers as to the desirability of dealing with a connected sentence rather than a single word. "A single word," he tells us, "is more likely to be faulty than to possess any intrinsic merit: for although we may speak of a word as appropriate, distinguished or sublime, it can possess none of these properties save in relation to connected and consecutive speech; since when we praise words, we do so because they suit the matter."<sup>9</sup>

### III

The intimate association between school and Synagogue, which has been often stressed by us, renders it highly probable that both institutions employed essentially the same method in their treatment of the Bible lesson. This method had two principal features: the connected verse as a unit and a free rendering in the vernacular according to the sense rather than the letter of the text. There is some ground for believing that the lesson in the school was conducted in the following manner: first a reading of the verse in the original; then a translation, or explanation in the vernacular; and finally, another reading in Hebrew alone. This, at any rate, would seem to have been the practice of the individual student.<sup>10</sup> The translation was therefore used only as a means of providing a quick approach to the meaning of the text and was discarded as soon as it accomplished its function.

In post-Talmudic ages the method of translation in the Jewish school gradually deteriorated until it lost all the pedagogically valuable elements once so prominent in it.

The verse was no longer taken as a whole, but broken up into so many separate words, which were treated as units for the purpose of translation regardless of their grammatical peculiarities or their place in the sentence. And instead of a free and flexible explanation, a rigid translation was demanded for each separate word. The result was often that the children did not see the wood for the trees and the Bible lesson became little more than a dry linguistic exercise. This form of instruction survived all the attacks of educational reformers and is at the present day still in use in the Jewish school in various parts of the world.<sup>11</sup>

Translation as a method of language teaching has been the subject of heated controversies in recent times. One of the earlier pioneers of the "Direct method," Vietor, considered that translation was an art which did not belong to the school. Others, less extreme, would yet drastically restrict its use. Thus a prominent English educationist tells us that the premature demand for it results in the pupil's murdering both languages impartially. And the translator outside the school, especially he who follows the text too literally, has come in for many an uncomplimentary epithet which reminds us of the dictum of the ancient Jewish rabbi. So, for instance, according to R. L. Stevenson, "a translation is like the wrong side of a piece of tapestry; it is a blackguardly travesty."<sup>12</sup> At any rate the least objectionable form of it as far as the school is concerned would seem to be that of the Jewish teacher in Talmudic times: the connected verse, or sentence, as a whole; a free explanation in the mother tongue; and finally an expressive reading in the original alone. In this form the method is less likely to interfere with the attainment of the recognised aim of language learning: the establishment of direct association between experience and expression.

## CHAPTER XVI

### DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOL

I.—Comenius on discipline. Quotation from the “Ethics of the Fathers.” A picture of the Talmudic elementary school. II.—Severe discipline was rendered necessary by the form of the organisation. Another cause of the severity of discipline was the “spirit of the times.” Theories of punishment in the Bible. III.—Ideas on punishment in Talmudic times. Comparison with the Hellenistic school. The manner of flogging. Children’s reactions to flogging. The offence of “talking.” Flogging as a stimulus to intellectual effort. Pupils were expected to perform little offices for their teachers. The story of the boy Samuel. Severity of chastisement. Illustrations from the Talmud. Rewards. The story of the saintly teacher.

#### I

“THE very sun in the heavens gives us a lesson on this point (discipline). In early spring, when plants are young and tender, he does not scorch them, but warms and invigorates them by slow degrees, not putting forth his full heat until they are full-grown and bring forth fruit and seeds. . . . In the same way a musician does not strike his lyre a blow with his fist or stick, nor does he throw it against the wall, because it produced a discordant sound; but, setting to work on scientific principles, he tunes it and gets it into order. Just such a skilful and sympathetic treatment is necessary to instil a love of learning into the minds of our pupils, and any other procedure will only convert their idleness into antipathy and their lack of interest into downright stupidity.”<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to realise that a man like Comenius, who could write so movingly about children, should declare almost in the same breath that it is an “incontestable fact

that punishment should be employed towards those who err." He does, it is true, make a distinction between an offence against God and an offence against Priscian—that is, between moral delinquency and intellectual incapacity. The former only is "a crime and should be expiated by an extremely severe punishment." But among these "crimes" are included not only blasphemy and obscenity, but also "disobeying the master's orders," envy and—idleness!<sup>2</sup>

After this the reader will perhaps be less surprised at the inconsistencies and contradictions in the views on the child which we meet so often in rabbinical literature. In their own way the rabbis could speak of childhood almost as beautifully as Comenius. Listen, for example, to the following:

"Every day an angel goes out from the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, to destroy the world and turn it into nothing. Then He bethinks Himself of the school-children and immediately His anger is turned into mercy."<sup>3</sup>

Many similar passages are scattered throughout Talmudic literature. But these mostly belong to preachers, or to educational leaders and reformers. They show us only one side of the picture. To see the other side, we have to follow these "little saviours," to whom our sinful world owes its daily escape, into the schoolroom and see the actual conditions of their daily work.

The following well-known text from the "Ethics of the Fathers" will afford us some idea of the general atmosphere of the school.

"This is the way for the study of the Torah: bread and salt thou must eat, and water by measure thou must drink; upon the ground thou must sleep, and live a life of privation the while thou toilest in the Torah. If thou doest thus, 'happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee'; happy shalt thou be in this world and it shall be well with thee in the world to come."<sup>4</sup>

That there is little exaggeration in this sombre picture, which is intended as a description of life in the high school, we know from the rabbinical schools in Eastern Europe in modern times. In these institutions the rules for the "way of the study of the Torah" were carried out almost literally. The elementary school could hardly conform to such a rigorous standard—or children would not be children. But it is most probable that in this, as in many other respects, it looked up to the superior institution and made a brave effort to copy its manners and customs. It is at any rate certain that, in so far as the teacher could help it, no unnecessary laxity of conduct was permitted. How far he was able to enforce his will is a different question. To answer this we need to have some idea of the general conditions of the school: its organisation, curriculum, and methods of teaching. These subjects are dealt with fully elsewhere; a few bald lines will suffice here.

The school was held in the earlier period in the teacher's home; in later times in the Synagogue, or in an adjoining room. Of furniture there was none: the pupils sat on the ground, "lying in the dust of the teacher's feet,"<sup>5</sup> and the teacher sat among them. The whole equipment consisted of wax tablets and pointers, and of scrolls of the Law, or special scrolls, which were scarce and very expensive. These the children held on their knees, sometimes two or three together using one scroll between them. Numbers were fairly large—anything up to fifty. Only in the fourth century do we hear of an effort by an educational reformer to limit the number for one teacher to twenty-five, but such reforms spread only very slowly. Since there was no idea of the technique of class teaching in those times, we hear of no attempt at classification. Children from the age of six, or even younger, up to probably the age of thirteen, were taught in the same school—and in the same class. As in

the Greek school, the day began early, about sunrise, and finished after nightfall. But unlike his Hellenistic contemporary who could lie at nights and dream of the freedom of the holidays,<sup>6</sup> the Jewish boy had practically no vacations, except the festivals and, perhaps, some short half-holidays. The curriculum consisted mainly of the Bible, studied out of an unvocalised text, and of the liturgy, for which no books existed at all. The lessons were not only recited but chanted, which relieved somewhat the strain on the memory. The most interesting part of the work probably was the practical training in religious ceremonial in which the school co-operated with the home. Teaching, as all over the ancient world, was individual, the pupils between their turns being left largely to themselves.

## II

Discipline in such a place would tax the powers even of the most gifted of teachers. It could hardly be maintained without making, in the words of Comenius, "the school resound with shrieks and blows." The goldsmith's method of "gentle taps" on his precious metal would be quite inadequate. It was the strap, plied frequently and heavily, by which the teacher could hope to keep up a semblance of order, or get any work done.

In order to avoid any misapprehension, it is necessary to point out that the Jewish school of Talmudic times was, in its organisation, type of curriculum and methods very much like its contemporary Hellenistic schools. The most striking difference was the absence in the Jewish school of secular subjects: writing, arithmetic, gymnastics, and instrumental music. But this was compensated for by the rich variety of ritual and ceremonial practices which never fail to make their appeal to the child. But it was not the content of education that necessitated severe disciplinary

methods. It was rather the form of its organisation, and this was the same in its essentials all over the ancient civilised world.

Another, and even more important, cause of the severity of discipline was the "spirit of the times." Corporal punishment was a universally sanctioned form of correction, and the school reflected more or less faithfully the manners and practices of adult society. We are therefore not surprised to find the birch or the strap, as the case might be, the supreme arbiter in the affairs of the school, wherever that might be situated, in Athens, or Rome, or Alexandria, or Jerusalem. More humane views of discipline were voiced from time to time by enlightened educationists; but these made but little headway down to our own days.

This rather lengthy discussion is made necessary by the fact that, with some notable exceptions, Jewish education is treated by historians as if it were an isolated incident, completely cut off from the general stream of the history of education. This view is largely responsible for the stagnant state in which the subject is finding itself at the present time. For a proper evaluation of the Jewish school, of its aims and ideals, and its methods, it must be studied in the wider context of general education of which throughout its history it formed part. Through the medium of the early Christian school it has played its part in helping to shape the development of general educational thought; whilst in its own turn it was never completely immune from the influence of the ideas and practices in the contemporary non-Jewish school.

Was there any generally accepted theory of punishment among Jewish teachers of those times? As has already been suggested, such a theory, assuming that it existed, would have been a reflection of current ideas in adult society. We have therefore to discover the nature of these ideas, and this is by no means an easy matter.

We are told by writers on the subject that "in Hebrew Law the dominant principle was the *jus talionis*"—"as he did, so shall it be done to him"—and that it was an advance when retribution was made proportionate to the crime.<sup>7</sup> This, however, seems to be too simple to be true. There is indeed abundant evidence for this view. "An eye for an eye" immediately occurs to the mind. But there are not many theories, of religion, ethics, or education, for which one could not find evidence in the Bible. And this is even more true of the Talmud. An examination of the relevant passages will show, perhaps somewhat to our surprise, that almost all the principal theories of punishment, ancient as well as modern, are represented in biblical literature. Often enough these various theories are found side by side with a disregard for logical consistency and systematic formulation which one must expect in books of such a composite nature. Yet it is possible to trace a fairly continuous line of development.

In the earlier writings, such as the Book of the Covenant, the dominant principle is that of retributive justice. To use again Comenius' words, it is based on "the incontestable proposition that punishment should be employed towards those who err." But it was an effort to restrain in some way primitive vindictiveness, to make the punishment proportionate to the crime.<sup>8</sup> The Book of Deuteronomy introduces a new principle which can be best expressed in modern terminology as "protective" or "preventive" punishment. Again and again it insists that the object of punishment is either to "destroy the evil"—to protect society, or that "others may hear and be afraid," that is to deter would-be criminals.<sup>9</sup> As yet it is the "ends of justice" or the interests of the community that are chiefly considered. The criminal himself, his motives, the likely effect of the punishment upon his future behaviour, are largely ignored, until we come to the prophetic writings, in

which it is the sinner, rather than the sin, that is the chief object of concern. Punishment as a means of reforming the evil-doer has become the predominant idea. This is brought out with particular force by Ezekiel. One need only instance chapter xviii: a striking sermon on the subject of the reformatory principle of punishment. "Have I any pleasure at all in the death of the wicked? and not that he should turn from his way and live?"

But prophecy would be meaningless without the idea of repentance or reform. This idea is indeed its very cornerstone. And yet even in the later literature the old retributive principle emerges quite often. This need cause little surprise: old ideas living on side by side with the new which are supposed to have replaced them is not an uncommon manifestation in the history of human thought.

Another theory deserving mention is that punishment has in itself a training value for the "testing" or "hardening" of character. It is already found in Deuteronomy, and it apparently forms the main contribution of Elihu to the debate between Job and his friends.<sup>10</sup> In adult life this can have application only in the sphere of relations between God and man. The sinister implications of such a theory in the school, where, in the words of Quintilian, "a man is allowed so much authority over an age so weak and so unable to resist ill-treatment," need hardly be stressed. That such ideas did penetrate the school at one time or another is sufficiently clear from the incident of Erasmus' teacher which will be given in a later chapter.

### III

The preceding discussion will enable us to appreciate more clearly the ideas on punishment current among Jewish teachers of Talmudic and earlier times. Our chief authorities for the earlier period, Proverbs and Ben-Sira,

date from a time when the more advanced views on the object of punishment had already found a fairly wide acceptance. The idea of "revenge" or "retribution" is almost entirely absent from them when they are concerned with children. Punishment is directed not to the past, but to the present and the future. Its object is not the expiation of sins, but the eradication of evil habits, the moral and intellectual reformation of the offender. That the rod can accomplish all this they had no manner of doubt.

In Talmudic times the attitude to the child underwent a radical change, but the ideas on punishment current in the later biblical period continued to hold sway in the school. The rod of the Bible, it is true, has disappeared; we hear instead only of the strap—perhaps as a result of Hellenistic influence. But whether this meant a change for the better from the child's point of view it is not easy to say. In the Roman school there were several instruments for the infliction of punishment, graded according to the gravity of the offence. In the Hellenistic school, we learn from the third mime of Herondas, there was more than one kind of strap. The truant boy begs the teacher not to use the stinging oxtail, but "the other one."<sup>11</sup> There is some reason to think that the Jewish teacher also had more than one arrow in his quiver. There was a heavy strap, used for inflicting stripes upon adults, of which the Talmud gives us a detailed description.<sup>12</sup> It is not unlikely that it was used also in the school. But Rav, a famous scholar of the third century c.e. and an educational reformer, advised an elementary schoolmaster of his time to employ only a shoe-strap for flogging children.<sup>13</sup> To say on the strength of this, as some writers do, that the Jewish teacher used nothing heavier than a shoe-strap is confusing a pious wish with historic fact.<sup>14</sup> Teachers disregarded Rav's advice in the same way as he himself ignored the advice of Proverbs and Ben-Sira.

The manner of flogging may be inferred from indirect Talmudic references. The culprit was not, as in the Hellenistic and other schools, hoisted on the back of some other pupil or assistant, but "bent over a post" and beaten on the back between the shoulders.<sup>15</sup>

Floggings, as might be expected, were frequent. We even read of pupils who were flogged every day and who showed signs of fear at the mere sight of the strap, even before they knew for whom it was intended—a kind of "conditioned reflex."<sup>16</sup> We are also told something of the children's reactions to punishment. Four types are distinguished: one who is flogged and remains silent; another who "kicks"; a third who begs for mercy; and a fourth who "asks for more."<sup>17</sup>

Pupils were punished for all sorts of offences. One of these was "talking"—much the same as in modern schools. "Children's talk," we read in an early text, "puts a man out of the world"—that is, if he encourages it.

What an interpretation a pious Jew could put on this passage we may see from the will of a saintly scholar of the eighteenth century. "My beloved son, I bear witness to myself that though I had many children I never kissed any of them, or took any of them in my arms; nor did I indulge with them in idle talk. The warning of the rabbis to beware of children's talk was constantly in my mind. But, alas! We see now with our own eyes that the father himself accustoms his children to idle talk."<sup>18</sup>

But it should be borne in mind that teaching was individual and the pupils had plenty of time on their hands between their turns. Talking and noise were inevitable in the circumstances. Martial tells us what an annoyance a Roman elementary school could be to people in the neighbourhood.<sup>19</sup> A Jew of Talmudic times could not speak of a school in the contemptuous terms of the Roman writer; but we know from legal discussions that neighbours ob-

jected to schoolmasters settling in the vicinity, no doubt on account of the noise, and that these objections were sometimes sustained by the law.<sup>20</sup>

The children naturally were not always satisfied with talking alone. We read, for instance, of Hiyya, the son of Rav, mentioned before, who was fighting in school with another boy, and the latter was apparently getting the best of it. Hiyya, in the manner of many children in all ages, "told the teacher."<sup>21</sup>

That flogging was administered in cases of intellectual inability or dullness goes without saying. The Book of Proverbs had already advocated the use of the birch as a stimulus to intellectual effort. There are rabbis who speak boastingly of the "goodly blows" they had received from their teachers before they managed to grasp a certain subject.<sup>22</sup> This was not in any way a peculiarity of the Jewish school. We hear the same tale everywhere: from Augustine, who speaks bitterly of the floggings he received for being slow to learn;<sup>23</sup> from Heine, who tells us that he learned to distinguish between the Latin regular and irregular verbs by the greater number of blows he received for the latter; down to the Yorkshire schoolmaster, who is said to have caned a whole class for spelling "pigeon" without a "d."

The pupil was expected to perform certain little offices for his teacher, sometimes of a domestic nature—a thing which children are seldom loth to do. A rabbi of the third century C.E. goes as far as saying that "all the services which a slave performs for his master, a pupil must also do for his teacher"—which, of course, must not be taken literally. Elsewhere we read that "to deny a pupil the opportunity to perform services for his teacher is equal to denying him kindness," or "to removing from him the fear of Heaven."<sup>24</sup> The following incident shows that this was extended also to the elementary school.

The boy Samuel, who in later life became famous as a scholar, doctor, and astronomer, was crying when he was found by his father. The following conversation then took place between them.

“Why are you crying?”

“Because my teacher beat me.”

“But why?”

“Because he said to me: ‘You were feeding my son, but you did not carry out the religious observance of washing your hands before doing so.’”

“And why did you not wash your hands?”

“It was his son who ate, so why should I wash?”

The father concluded the conversation by saying: “It is not sufficient that he—your teacher—is ignorant of the Law, but he must also beat you!”

What the consequences were for the teacher we are not told.<sup>25</sup> It is an obvious inference from this story that laxity in religious observance, real or imaginary, was dealt with with a heavy hand.

How severe chastisement could be we may see from an incident, dating from the fifth century C.E., of which we have three separate reports in the Talmud. There was an elementary schoolmaster who “transgressed” against his pupils and was therefore removed from his post. The “transgression,” according to the greatest Talmudic commentator, consisted in the fact that “he beat the children until they died.” But it is the sequel that is significant: the teacher was restored to his position, because no one so “thorough” could be found!<sup>26</sup>

In one respect at least the Jewish schoolboy had an advantage over his fellows in non-Jewish schools. During a certain period of the year flogging was not permitted. It is recorded that a great Palestinian scholar of the third century C.E., who was the spiritual leader of his time, ordered the teachers not to use the strap during the three

weeks which separate the fasts commemorating the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. It was apparently feared that in such an unlucky time flogging might end in a serious accident. And so the saddest season of the year was turned for the schoolboy into a holiday from the strap.<sup>27</sup>

Rewards, presumably for good progress, have been referred to before. The following story is interesting in this connection. "Rav came to a certain place where he proclaimed a fast because of the absence of rain, but no rain fell. Then a certain man came forth and began to lead in the public prayer. As soon as he uttered the first sentence, 'Thou causest the wind to blow,' the wind began to blow. When he said, 'And the rain to fall,' the rain came down. To Rav's question as to what was his profession, he answered: 'I am an elementary schoolmaster, and I teach the children of the poor as well as the children of the rich; and from him who cannot afford it, I take nothing. I also have a fish pond, and the boy who is unwilling to learn, I bribe with these and coax him until he comes and learns.'"<sup>28</sup>



PART V  
MANUAL WORK



## CHAPTER XVII

### BEN-SIRA AND "THE IDEAL SCRIBE"

I.—Introductory. Bertholet on trades and callings amongst the ancient Hebrews. Criticism. The Bible on the skilled craftsman; and on the toiler in general. The equation of "knowledge" with "virtue" was unknown to the Bible. II.—The conception of "pure" knowledge as an ideal could only arise in a society like that of Greece. Illustrations from Plutarch and others. The separation between a liberal and a professional education. III.—Ben-Sira on "knowing and doing." A Hebrew variation on a popular Greek theme. Suggested sources of Ben-Sira's inspiration. IV.—A strong reaction against Ben-Sira's views in later times. Jewish scholars usually followed some trade. The story of Rabbi Joshua.

### I

THE great educational discovery of the nineteenth century, according to Dr. Ballard, was the human hand. The reaction against mere book learning in the school which set in towards the end of the past century has grown steadily stronger and has received an added impetus from the changed outlook on cultural values in the post-war period. But whilst the training value of the arts and crafts is a modern discovery, the underlying wider problems of labour and leisure, or of the supposed antithesis between a "liberal" and a "professional" education, exercised the minds of educationists since the days of ancient Greece. These problems were first clearly formulated in classical Athens, but they also claimed the active attention of the Jewish teacher in the period with which we are concerned.

The Jewish attitude to manual work and to the teaching of arts and crafts will be discussed in the following two chapters. By way of anticipation we may say that the ideas

of the Talmudic teachers on the subject under discussion will be shown to approach much nearer to modern views than might be expected. In later times, as a result of adverse external conditions, a sharp change took place in the Jewish outlook on religious and cultural values, and manual work came to be regarded in a negative manner reminiscent of the attitude of classical Greece. In modern Jewish education, especially under the influence of the cultural revival in Palestine, a strong tendency to return to the older, more original Jewish views on manual work has become the outstanding feature. This, however, is beyond the province of our present enquiry.

The following quotation from Bertholet's "History of Hebrew Civilisation" may serve as a fitting introduction to our subject. This is how he begins his description of trades and callings among the ancient Hebrews: "We must lay aside our modern conceptions of trades and callings when we try to understand what these meant to the ancient Hebrews. It is significant that the story of Paradise was written under the impression that the divine curse rested on all human toil. Man toils 'in the sweat of his brow,' and the ground brings forth thorns! In spite of all the passages lauding the excellence of the land, the fact that its stony ground yielded a harvest only in return for great toil schooled the Hebrew to take the view that all work means toil, and he would not have been an Oriental had he not done his best to keep all toil as far away from him as possible."<sup>1</sup>

It is not easy to see what this curious homily is based on—unless it be the word "cursed" in the Paradise story, where, incidentally, it is applied not to work but to the ground. Nor does the writer himself take the trouble to justify his view. On the contrary, the rest of the chapter seems to be devoted to a repudiation of the principal idea of the introduction.

The same biblical text also evoked a homily from a rabbi of the third century, and it is rather interesting to compare the two. "When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Adam: 'Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth for thee,' his eyes began to flow with tears. 'O master of the world,' said he, 'shall I and my ass eat out of the same crib?' But when he was further told, 'In the sweat of thy brow shall thou eat *bread*,' his mind was appeased."<sup>2</sup>

Here, it will be observed, there is no suspicion of any "curse" attaching to labouring "in the sweat of the brow" as long as it produces food fit for human consumption. And there can be no doubt that this is the truer representation of the outlook of the ancient Hebrew. For no one without preconceived notions can carry away from the Bible—and this is equally true of the Hebrew Bible as of the New Testament—the impression that toil is something "to be kept away as far as possible," or even that it is in any way undignified or incompatible with any station in life however high. To till the ground was man's natural calling. "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground" runs the simple tale of the creation of man. The great national heroes, men like Abraham, Moses, Saul, or David, were peasants and shepherds. But there is never a suggestion that there was anything out of the ordinary in that. In the same natural manner is the name of "Shepherd" applied to God.<sup>3</sup>

As to skilled craftsmen, they are invariably spoken of with respect. The following characteristic passage shows it sufficiently clearly. "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying, See I have called by name Bezaleel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in all manner of workmanship, to devise cunning works, to work in gold and in silver and in brass, and in

cutting of stones to set them, and of carving of timber, to work in all manner of workmanship . . . and in the hearts of all that are wise-hearted I have put wisdom that they may make all that I have commanded thee."

This is typical of the Bible as a whole. The skilled worker is wise-hearted; he is possessed of wisdom and understanding; he is filled with the spirit of God.<sup>4</sup>

While this almost reverential attitude is reserved for the "cunning" craftsman, the toiler in general also occasionally comes in for a word of praise. Sometimes we hear of the healthy contempt of the hard-working farmer for the idler,<sup>5</sup> or of the suspicion with which the simple peasant regards the crafty merchant.<sup>6</sup> But as a rule the Bible is neither eulogistic nor deprecatory of work. It simply takes it for granted that man has to labour in order to sustain life. It is not aware of an antithesis between a "rational" and a "menial" occupation; still less of such problems as "labour and leisure," or "knowing and doing." The equation of "virtue" with "knowledge," or of the highest good with philosophic contemplation, was unknown to it. "Virtue," even in later times, when it was already identified with "wisdom," consisted mainly in dealing justly with one's fellow-men in the ordinary run of practical life, and in discharging one's duties towards God in a superficially correct or, as the prophets demanded, in a more inward manner.<sup>7</sup>

## II

The conception of "pure" or contemplative knowledge as an ideal, or as a means of achieving perfect happiness or perfect virtue, was utterly strange to the Jews of biblical times. The antithesis between a worthy life—that is, a life of reason and contemplation—and the "mere living" of those who have to spend their energies in labour of all kinds, could have no meaning in the social and economic

conditions of ancient Judea. It could only arise in a society in which the social-economic structure was based on a division of the people into those who had to labour for a living and those who were relieved from this necessity.

Such conditions existed in Greece, where a comparatively small number of citizens subsisted on the labour of a great mass of working slaves, who rendered all types of menial and even intellectual services.<sup>8</sup> The few at the top could devote themselves to their own physical and intellectual improvement, and it was inevitable that "leisure" should become an ideal whilst all manner of labour should be regarded as servile.

"One of the greatest privileges that Lycurgus procured his countrymen," Plutarch tells us, "was the enjoyment of leisure, the consequence of his forbidding them to exercise any mechanic trade. It was not worth their while to take great pains to raise a fortune, since riches were of no account, and the helots who tilled the ground were answerable for the procedure. . . . To this purpose we have a story of a Lacedæmonian, who, happening to be at Athens while the court sat, was informed of a man who was fined for idleness, and when the poor fellow was returning home in great dejection, attended by his condoling friends, he desired the company to show him the person that was condemned for keeping up his dignity. So much beneath them they reckoned all attention to mechanic arts and all desires of riches!"<sup>9</sup>

That is true also of other parts of Greece, with the exception of Athens, where public opinion was more favourable to labour. "The Hellenes as a nation regarded all forms of handicraft as bourgeois and contemptible. . . . To do anything in order to extract money from someone else was, in their opinion, vulgar and ungentlemanly. . . ." The cheapness and abundance of serf or slave labour made it possible for a large proportion of the free population to

live in idleness and devote their time to the development of the body by physical exercises, of the mind by perpetual discussions, and of the imagination by art and music.<sup>10</sup>

The cities in which the nobility was in power, we are told by another writer, had nothing but disdain for the labouring classes, and often the name of citizen was considered incompatible with the exercise of any trade whatever. In some places shopkeepers were admitted to the magistracy only ten years after retiring from business; in others even farming was a disgrace. In one city the infamy attaching to all trades was such that they had to be put into an administrative service entrusted to public slaves. And the philosophers and thinkers, with the exception of Socrates, were led to defend these prejudices. Changed conditions in the later Hellenistic period rendered these views untenable in their extremer form, but the upper classes continued to feel for labour some of the contempt bestowed on it in earlier times.<sup>11</sup>

In such circumstances arose the separation between a "liberal" and a professional education, a distinction which, formulated by the Greeks more than two thousand years ago, has continued to influence educational thought down to the present day. For in modern times also, no less than in Greece of old, although in a different form, the sharp social and economic differentiation between the leisured and the labouring classes tended to encourage and keep alive that distinction. This aspect of the educational legacy of Greece is not always fully appreciated.<sup>12</sup>

### III

Jewish thought in biblical times knew nothing of this distinction. It is necessary to bear this clearly in mind in order that we may see in their true light the developments

that took place in this connection in the Greek and Roman periods.

The first time we hear of a change in the Jewish view on manual work is in the Book of Ben-Sira. And it comes with a suddenness and abruptness for which the reader of older Jewish literature is entirely unprepared. We get the impression that something akin to a spiritual revolution had taken place during the immediately preceding times of which we otherwise know so little.

This is what Ben-Sira has to tell us on the problem of "knowing and doing."

"The wisdom of the scribe cometh by opportunity of leisure.  
He that hath little business can become wise.  
How can he become wise that holdeth the goad,  
And glorieth in brandishing the lance?  
Who leadeth cattle and turneth about oxen,  
And whose discourse is with bullocks?

\* \* \* \* \*

Likewise the maker of carving and cunning device  
Who by night and by day hath no rest.

\* \* \* \* \*

So also is the smith that sitteth by the furnace  
And regardeth the weighty vessels.  
The flame of the fire cracketh his flesh  
And with the heat of the furnace he gloweth.

\* \* \* \* \*

Likewise the potter who sitteth at his wheel  
And driveth the vessel with the soles of his feet.

\* \* \* \* \*

His arms are cracked by the clay,  
And before old age he is bent and bowed.

\* \* \* \* \*

All these are deaf with their hands,  
And each is wise in his handiwork.  
Without them a city cannot be inhabited  
And wherever they dwell they hunger not.  
But they shall not be enquired of for public counsel,  
And in the assembly they have no precedence.

On the seat of the judge they do not sit,  
 And law and justice they understand not.  
 Not so he that applieth himself to the fear of God  
 And to set his mind upon the Law of the Most High,  
 Who searcheth out the wisdom of all the ancients,  
 And is occupied with the prophets of old,  
 Who heedeth the discourses of men of renown  
 And entereth into the deep things of parables;  
 Searcheth out the hidden meanings of proverbs  
 And is conversant with the dark sayings of parables;  
 Who serveth among great men  
 And appeareth before princes.

\* \* \* \* \*

Who is careful to seek unto his Maker  
 And before the Most High entreat mercy

\* \* \* \* \*

He himself directeth counsel and knowledge,  
 And setteth his mind on their secrets.

\* \* \* \* \*

His understanding many do praise,  
 And never shall his name be blotted out.”<sup>13</sup>

This is much more than a description of the “ideal scribe,” as some take it to be. It is a philosophy of life and therefore also a philosophy of education, and is of considerable importance for the understanding of the development of Jewish educational thought. The author gives us his religious, sociological and political views. The ideal of a worthy life is freedom from all physical occupations; leisure to be devoted to the study of the Law and the Prophets; to the searching out of the meaning of the proverbs and parables; to prayer. Only men who lead such lives can have wisdom and understanding, and are fit to give counsel, to serve among the great and to “appear before princes”—that is, to be the rulers of the “city” or the state.

On the other side there are the peasant, the smith, the potter—all those who have to labour for a livelihood. They are indeed “wise” in their own work. Also, they are in-

dispensable to the existence of the state. But they possess neither physical beauty nor spiritual perfection and are therefore "not fit to govern."

In other words, they are means, necessary means, for the existence of others; they are not ends in themselves.

It is abundantly evident that this philosophy cannot be regarded as a natural development of the older Jewish outlook on life; it bears clearly the stamp of a foreign importation despite the Hebrew phraseology with which the author could not help clothing it. When we bear in mind that he wrote at a time "when Hellenistic influence was at its highest in Judea," and that he was apparently a well-travelled man with personal experience of social and political life in Hellenistic lands, it is not hard to find the origin of his ideas.<sup>14</sup> The passage can indeed be best described as a Hebrew variation on a popular Greek theme. The conception of wisdom is essentially Jewish: the Law and the Prophets; proverbs and parables; the wisdom of the ancients. Again, Ben-Sira, as a Jew, could not fail to emphasise the value of prayer. But the contempt for mechanical trades; the denial to the artisan of the right to take part in the government of the state; the stress laid on the physical deformities caused by manual work—these are all purely Greek ideas. One might almost point to the following as the source of his inspiration:

"... It is evident that what is necessary ought to be taught to all; but that which is necessary for one is not necessary for all; for there ought to be a distinction between the employment of a freeman and a slave. The first of these should be taught everything useful which will not make those who know it mean. Everything is to be esteemed mean, and every art and every discipline which renders the body, the mind, or the understanding of freemen unfit for the habit and practice of virtue; for which reason all those arts which tend to deform the body are

called mean, and all those employments which are exercised for gain; for they take off from the freedom of the mind and render it sordid. There are also some liberal arts which are not improper for freemen to apply to in a certain degree; but to endeavour to acquire a perfect skill in them is exposed to the faults I have just mentioned.”<sup>15</sup> The artisan, according to Aristotle, is inferior even to the slave. He can only attain excellence in proportion as he becomes a slave. And even the fine arts, such as music, painting, or sculpture, in so far as their practice is concerned, are in the same class as the “menial” occupations. The denial of the artisan’s fitness to participate in the national government follows naturally from such views, and “the best civic community,” Aristotle further teaches us, “will never admit an artisan to the franchise.”

#### IV

Such ideas could never strike deep roots in the Jewish communities, where the social and economic conditions were totally different from those obtaining in Greece. During the pre-Maccabean period, when Hellenistic culture threatened to engulf Judea along with the rest of the old world, it is not unlikely that Greek views on labour penetrated into some circles—especially among the upper classes. But the reaction later on was strong and widespread. “Love work and hate lordship,” a leading scholar, a hundred and fifty years after Ben-Sira, teaches us. And he is typical of the whole succession of rabbis down to the end of the Talmudic period. The biblical heroes, Abraham, Moses, David, have their counterparts in Hillel the wood-cutter, Eliezer the farmer, Joshua ben Hananiah the needle-maker, Akiba ben Joseph the shepherd, Johanan the shoe-maker, and innumerable others.<sup>16</sup>

It should be borne in mind that a teacher of the “Oral

Law" was forbidden to charge a fee, and even those called upon to administer justice were only allowed to receive a compensation for the actual time taken off from their ordinary work. In such circumstances scholars, with the exception of a small minority who enjoyed independent means, were obliged to follow some occupation. This was very often agriculture, especially in Babylonia; but other trades were also favoured. And it seldom occurred to anyone that this could be a disqualification from leadership of the highest rank.

The following may be taken as typical of the general position. Gamaliel, a great-grandson of Hillel, and the spiritual head of the community towards the end of the first century c.e., was removed from his position by the members of the Academy after a sharp controversy in the course of which the popular scholar Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah was treated by him rather harshly. After some time Gamaliel decided to go and ask Joshua's forgiveness. When he reached the house he saw that the walls were black with soot. So he said: "From the walls of your house one can recognise that you are a needle-maker."\* To which Joshua replied: "Alas for the generation whose leader you are, and alas for the boat of which you are the captain! You do not know of the suffering of the scholars; how they maintain themselves; how they earn their livelihood." Gamaliel then said: "I humble myself before you; forgive me." But Joshua would not relent. The former again said: "Do it for the sake of my father's house." This appeal produced the desired effect. And it was the same scholar and manual worker, Joshua, who was sent on important missions to the Roman Emperor.

\* Or charcoal burner.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### ATTITUDE TO LABOUR IN LATER TIMES

I.—Talmudic eulogies of labour. The difference between the legal and the homiletical types of literature. Illustrations from the Talmud. II.—Discords in the chorus of praise. Reasons for these. Further illustrations from rabbinical literature. Some Hellenistic influence. III.—Hereditary trades. The learning of a trade was an essential part of a boy's education. Not all trades were equally favoured. Agriculture and commerce.

#### I

AND yet here, as in other respects, Hellenistic influence had not been completely eradicated. For while the Bible is not even aware of such a problem as the social or political status of the artisan, the Talmud grows more and more eulogistic of the value of labour, and one finds it difficult to avoid the impression that this excessive emphasis was intended to counteract some powerful influence from the outside.

As might be expected there is in this respect a difference between the legal and the homiletical types of rabbinical literature. In the former we meet with the more natural attitude with which we are familiar from the Bible. It is, however, the latter that often affords a clearer insight into the people's mentality. Thus we read in an early law: "One may negotiate on a Sabbath for his boy to be taught the book (literacy) and to be taught a trade." Again, "The father is obliged with regard to his son to circumcise him, and to redeem him—thirty days after birth—and to teach him the Torah, and to arrange for his marriage, and to teach him a trade. . . . Rabbi Judah says, He who does

not teach his son a trade accustoms him to robbery.”<sup>1</sup> One cannot fail to note here that the learning of a trade is treated in the same manner as the study of the Torah: the one is apparently no more important than the other. The fact that trade is mentioned after the Torah probably shows us the chronological order in which these subjects were learnt.

From another early source we get an idea of the social position of the common labourer.

Once Rabbi Johanan, the son of Mathia, told his son to go and hire some labourers. So he hired the labourers and arranged to provide them also with food. Whereupon his father told him: “My son, even if you provide for them meals like those of King Solomon’s in his time, you will not have done your duty by them, for they are the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”<sup>2</sup> In the opinion of a famous authority of the third century, a labourer is entitled to renounce his agreement even in the middle of the day—something like the legalisation of “lightning strikes.” He bases himself on the Bible, which says that the children of Israel are “slaves to the Lord,” but not slaves to other slaves. The rabbis were even prepared to forego in favour of the craftsman some of the respect which they claimed from the rest of the community, and so did not require him, when engaged in his work, to rise before a scholar.<sup>3</sup>

Only a few typical extracts can be given here of the very extensive homiletical literature.

“The scholars of Jabneh were wont to say, ‘I am a created being and so is my fellow-man—who is not a student—a created being. My work is in town (study); his work is in the field. I rise early for my work; so does he for his. He cannot distinguish himself in my work, just as I cannot in his. It might be said that I do much study of the Torah and he does but little. But we have learned

that there is no difference whether one studies much or little as long as one's heart is directed towards heaven.' ”<sup>4</sup>

The apologetic tone for labour is unmistakable here. It is even more clearly brought out in some of the following: “Love work. How should one love it? It teaches us that one must love work and that he must not hate it. For just as the Torah was given by a covenant, so was work given by a covenant; as it is said, ‘Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work, but the seventh day shall be a Sabbath to the Lord thy God.’ ”

“Adam did not taste any food until he had done some work, as it is said, ‘And He put him in the Garden of Eden to dress it and keep it,’ and only after that is it said, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat.”

“Nor did the Holy One, blessed be He, cause His divine presence to rest on Israel until they had done some work, as it is said, ‘And let them *make* Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them.’ ”

“He who lives by his labour is superior to a God-fearing man; for concerning a God-fearing man it is said, ‘Happy is the man who fears the Lord,’ whereas concerning him who lives by his labour it is said, ‘If thou eat the labour of thine hands, happy shalt thou be and it shall be well with thee’: happy shalt thou be in this world and it shall be well with thee in the world to come.”

“One must not say, ‘I shall eat and drink and enjoy myself and take no trouble, and heaven will have mercy.’ It is said, ‘And Thou didst bless the work of his hands’: a man must toil and work with his two hands: then God will send him His blessing.”

“An excellent thing is the study of the Torah combined with some worldly occupation, for the labour demanded by them both makes sin to be forgotten. All study of the Torah without work must in the end be futile and lead to sin.”

The last part of this statement, with one or two verbal changes, would win the hearty approval of many a modern educationist.

The following may be taken as popular sayings, although not all of them are anonymous.

“Great is work, for it honours him who performs it.”

“Idleness leads to immorality.”

“Idleness leads to insanity.”

“Seven years the famine lasted; it never reached the craftsman’s door.”

“Skin a dead animal in the market-place and get paid for it; and do not say, ‘I am a great man and it is below my dignity.’”<sup>5</sup>

## II

This chorus of praise was not, however, without its dis cords. Now and again another strain makes itself heard, affording us a glimpse into a different current of thought which the majority strove to counteract. Among those who differed from the general view we find some teachers of very high standing in rabbinical literature. It would, however, be a mistake to consider that they derived their inspiration entirely from Hellenistic philosophy, although some of their phraseology is no doubt borrowed from that source. Their object was not the depreciation of labour but rather the glorification of study—that is, the study of the Torah. They all belong to the period following the defeat of Bar-Kochba, and their views must be related to the social and political conditions which arose as a result of that critical event. As has been repeatedly emphasised previously, the disastrous failure of the rebellion under Bar-Kochba formed a turning-point in the history of Jewish educational thought as in that of Judaism in general. Education was the only form of social activity left to a people deprived of its political institutions; it

seemed to offer the only means of saving Judaism from extinction. There is no wonder that in these conditions it was represented as the "highest good" to which a man should devote himself to the exclusion of every other interest. We have a parallel to that in modern times—the great enthusiasm for education in Prussia after its humiliating defeats at the hands of Napoleon. In his "Addresses to the German Nation" Fichte appealed to the leaders to turn to education as a means of national redemption. He set all his hopes for Germany on a new national system of education, and, we are told, "never before have the souls of men been so deeply stirred by the idea of raising the whole existence of mankind to a higher level."<sup>6</sup> The position of Palestine after 135 C.E. was not unlike that of Prussia of 1806. Politically it was even worse, the Jewish people having apparently lost all hopes of national independence. Many of the strangely exaggerated panegyrics on the value of the Torah assume a different meaning when placed against this social and political background. The sixth chapter of the "Ethics of the Fathers" may be mentioned as an outstanding example of this type of literature, although it belongs to a much later period.<sup>7</sup>

The following is concerned more directly with the question of labour *versus* study.

"Our sages taught: 'And thou shalt gather in thy corn'—what need is there for the Bible to say that? Because it is written elsewhere, 'This book of the Law shall not depart from thy mouth'—maybe this would be taken literally. Therefore is it written, 'And thou shalt gather in thy corn': attend to these things in the usual way. These are the words of Rabbi Ishmael. But Rabbi Simon ben Yohai says, 'If a man should plough in ploughing time, and sow in seed-time, and reap in harvest-time—what would become of the Torah? Nay, but when Israel are doing the will of the Omnipresent, their work will be done

for them by others, as it is said, 'And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks.' But when Israel are not doing the will of the Omnipresent, their work must be done by themselves; and not only that, but they have to do the work of other people, too, as it is said, 'And thou shalt serve thine enemies.'"<sup>8</sup> A rabbi of the fourth century comments on this: "Many have followed the teaching of Rabbi Ishmael and succeeded; others followed the teaching of Rabbi Simon and did not succeed."

That the latter's views did not find any wide acceptance in his own time may be seen from the remark of a colleague of his: "Come and see the difference between the former and the latter generations. The former generations made their study regular and their work casual—and they succeeded in both; the latter generations made their work regular and their study casual—and succeeded in neither."<sup>9</sup> Rabbi Simon, it may be added, was a fugitive from the fierce Roman persecution which followed the defeat of Bar-Kochba, and, according to tradition, remained in hiding for thirteen years, devoting himself during all this time to the study of the Torah.

A scholar of the same period declares that he is going to leave aside all the trades in the world and teach his son only the Torah. Another contemporary of Rabbi Simon's, a copyist by profession, would not go as far as that, his view being that "a man should always teach his son a fine and light trade."<sup>10</sup> The distinction between a "fine" and a "menial" occupation is, of course, a well-known Greek idea. It is characteristic that among Jews in the later Talmudic period tailoring was considered a "fine" trade. A rather extreme view of manual work as an undignified occupation is expressed by a famous rabbi of the third century C.E.: "As soon as a man has been appointed a leader of the community he is forbidden to do work in the presence of three people."<sup>11</sup> As is evident from the con-

text this was applied only to "menial" work. The author of the statement was an astronomer as well as a doctor. He did not apparently consider this latter craft "mean," although in the Talmud the doctor is counted amongst other tradesmen.<sup>11</sup>

### III

As in the Hellenistic world in general, hereditary transmission of trades was also the usual practice among Jews. Already in the Bible we find families of scribes or workers in linen. During second temple times we read of priestly families that specialised in certain services in connection with the temple ceremonial and would not disclose the secrets of their arts to others. One of these excelled in writing, others were bakers or incense-makers. In order to exert pressure on these families, who evidently had a monopoly of their trades, skilled craftsmen were brought from Alexandria—probably from the Jewish artisans' guilds of which we read elsewhere. Specialisation was apparently carried as far among Jews as in the rest of the Hellenistic world.<sup>12</sup>

In the third century c.e. we find a well-known scholar endeavouring to prove from a biblical text that one must not depart from one's ancestors' trade—from which we may gather that the practice of the hereditary succession of trades was already beginning to weaken. It was never rigidly adhered to, for apprenticeship was a well-established institution in Talmudic times. From the earlier period we have a record of a discussion whether a father may make arrangements on a Sabbath for the apprenticeship of his son to a tradesman, and the "joiner's apprentice" was quite a common figure in later times. It was even apparently not uncommon for Jews to send their sons to non-Jewish artisans to learn their trades. A prohibition was necessary to prevent children from being

apprenticed to idolaters, but not all non-Jews were included among these.<sup>13</sup>

The learning of a trade was an essential part of a boy's education and was regarded as of equal importance with the study of the Torah, although the latter was quite naturally given first attention. In a well-known text we get what may be considered a complete manual, in order of time, of the bringing up of a boy until he reached his manhood: circumcision; study of Torah; marriage; the learning of a trade.<sup>14</sup>

Naturally not all trades were equally favoured. Some kinds of labour, such as grinding of meal, cutting of wood, and drawing of water were already in Bible times regarded as degrading and fit only for slaves. So also was the small trader or hawker held in low esteem among Jews as amongst Greeks.<sup>15</sup> Commerce in general was apparently held in suspicion on moral grounds. Ben-Sira tells us that "a merchant shall hardly keep himself from wrong-doing," and in the Talmud we find an opinion that a man is forbidden to make his son a shopkeeper, "whose trade is a trade of robbers." The material advantages of commerce could not, however, be overlooked.<sup>16</sup>

There were other trades, besides that of the shopkeeper, which were thought to lead to laxity of morals. These were either the trades which involved frequent dealings with women, or those whose followers were held to be rather unscrupulous about other people's property, such as the ass-driver or the shepherd.<sup>17</sup> Some occupations, such as tanning and copper-mining or smelting, were regarded with so much contempt that their followers were ostracised and could be forced to divorce their wives. They were also exempted from the pilgrimage to the temple, apparently because no one would keep them company on account of their ill-smelling work. These and some others, we are told, may never be made kings or

high priests. But this, of course, reflects the conditions of a time when these high offices became a mere memory. In later times, however, they were apparently excluded from communal offices. It should be mentioned that the doctor, who is coupled with the butcher, is made the object of a particularly severe condemnation by the rabbis: "The best of doctors is doomed to hell; and the most honest butcher is Amalek's partner."<sup>18</sup>

On the other hand, agriculture, as might be expected, was the most widespread as well as the most respected occupation. One rabbi tells us that "a man who owns no land is not a man at all," because it is written, "The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He hath given to the children of men," this in spite of the fact that agriculture had few material benefits to offer in comparison with commerce, and that, in the language of a scholar of the third century, a man must become a slave to the ground if he is to get a living from it.<sup>19</sup>

It is difficult to imagine how anyone would apprentice his son to one of the despised trades. Their continuance can only be explained by the fact that callings were in those times so often hereditary.

"No trade will ever die out," Judah I, the compiler of the Mishnah, teaches us. "Happy is he who sees his parents engaged in a superior occupation: alas for him who sees his parents engaged in an inferior occupation! The world cannot go on without the perfume-maker, nor without the tanner; happy is he whose profession is that of the perfume-maker; alas for him whose profession is that of the tanner!"

This expresses the practical point of view. A deeper psychological note is struck by Rav, the famous disciple of Judah I, who tells us that "the Holy One, blessed be He, has made every profession attractive to him who has to follow it."<sup>20</sup>

PART VI  
THE CHILD



## CHAPTER XIX

### THE JEWISH ATTITUDE TO THE CHILD

I.—The position of the child in Bible times. Parental love. The child as a gift from God. Children's names. Preference for the son. The daughter was not an unwelcome member of the family. II.—“Exposing” was not common among Jews. Child sacrifice. Other forms of infanticide. The danger to childhood from tribal warfare. III.—In the earlier times the child was the property of his father. Illustrations from the Bible. The family as the social unit. The prophets and the idea of individual moral responsibility. Job and Ecclesiastes. The conception of the free personality in post-temple times. Infanticide was destroyed largely through the spread of the Jewish view on the sanctity of life. IV.—The fundamental difference between the Jews and the Greeks in their social ideals and in their attitude to the child. To the Greek thinker the man was lost in the citizen. Among the Jews individuality was never lost sight of. Talmudic teachers on the relation of the individual to the community.

### I

THE school, the home, and the community are the three great educational agencies. So far most of our work has been concerned with the school. To complete the picture we will devote the concluding chapters to the life of the child at home and in the community. We will begin with the time when he was merely a possession of his father with parental love as his only protection. We will then show how, after a long and painfully slow development, he finally acquired the right to his own life as a free human personality. This, it will be found, the Jewish child achieved some centuries before the children of other peoples—largely as a result of prophetic activity. After that we will describe the child's life at home and his rela-

tions with his parents. In the final chapter an attempt will be made to construct of the available biblical and Talmudic material a connected picture of the religious and social life of the Jewish child.

“Can a woman forget her sucking child, not to have compassion on the son of her womb?” Isaiah apparently found it difficult even to imagine such a thing. “Is there a father who hates his son?” exclaims a teacher who lived seven or eight hundred years later.<sup>1</sup> This, too, was thought to be impossible. The former is as typical of the Bible as the latter of Talmudic literature. The child as an object of love and tender care is a familiar biblical figure. “When Israel was a child, then I loved him,” says the prophet simply in the name of God. “Is Ephraim a dear son, a pleasant child? For as often as I speak of him, I do earnestly remember him still”—thus another prophet a hundred and fifty years later.<sup>2</sup> The father’s compassion for his son is a standing simile. “As a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him.”<sup>3</sup> We read of a father who cried in despair, “O my son, would that I had died for thee!” The same father fasted and wept and lay on the ground all the time another child of his was sick.<sup>4</sup> It goes without saying that the feelings of love and pity are even stronger in the mother. One recalls at once the incident, told with dignified reserve, of the “great woman” of Shunem who held her sick child on her knees until he died; and the poignant simplicity of the story of Hagar who sat at a distance “and raised her voice and wept,” unable to look on at the death of the child she was compelled to abandon.<sup>5</sup>

Such incidents have their parallels in other literatures. They express the simple love for the child flowing from the parental impulse, “nature’s brightest invention,” as William McDougall calls it. It is, however, characteristic of the Jewish mentality in those ancient times that chil-

dren were never considered a burden: the Bible contains no suggestion of that. The child is regarded as a gift from God, a mark of His grace, or a manifestation of His will. This idea appears already in connection with the first child born into the world; it is typical of the Bible in general.<sup>6</sup> Children are "an heritage from the Lord," a reward from Him. "These are my sons whom God hath given me here," Joseph informs his father. "Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me," says Isaiah in the same words. And Job, expressing his resignation to the will of God, says simply: "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away."<sup>7</sup> It is for this reason that children were often given names which made them living symbols of the threatened fate of the community, or of some special circumstance in the life of their own family. Some had the good fortune to be regarded as a token of God's favour and were rewarded with such beautiful names as "Hefzibah" or "Immanuel"; others, less fortunate, had to put up with such ungraceful combinations as "Ichabod" or "Loruhamah," or with a harsh and incongruous concatenation like "Maher-shalal-Hash-baz."<sup>8</sup> In the present time, too, parents usually follow their own inclinations and seldom consider the likely psychological effect of a name. But in the case of the prophets the chief consideration was, of course, the conviction that the child was sent into the world on a special mission, to serve either as a warning or as a harbinger of good tidings to his generation.

The son, the perpetuator of the father's line and name, was shown preference. This is a natural, almost instinctive idea which is hardly less active in modern than it was in ancient humanity. The birth of a son was an occasion of great joy; mourning for an only son was the current simile for sorrow and lamentation.<sup>9</sup>

It is noteworthy that this anxiety for the continuation of the line was as strong amongst women as amongst men,

although it was the father's name that was preserved. Rachel's despairing cry, "Give me children, or else I die," is merely expressive of the feelings of the childless wife whose position in a polygamous family must have been intolerable. The same may be true of Hannah's prayer. On the other hand, the daughters of Zelophehad plead apparently not on behalf of their own interests but for the preservation of their father's name; and the wise woman of Tekoa seems to be mainly concerned that "a name and a remainder shall be left to her husband."<sup>10</sup>

But it is characteristic of Jewish life in those early times that, whilst the son is shown greater favour, the daughter is not regarded as an unwelcome member of the family. There is no trace in the Bible of the contemptuous attitude to the girl so common amongst classical peoples and especially amongst the Greeks. There was a current proverb amongst the latter that "there is nothing more foolish than to have children." This was directed especially against the girl, who was apparently often exposed even if her father was in a position to bring her up.<sup>11</sup> The simple Judean peasant as we find him in the Bible was quite unripe for such a sophisticated view. His idea of happiness was a peaceful home after a day's toil in the field, and as described by the Psalmist, a wife like a fruitful vine, and a progeny "like olive plants (a mixed metaphor!) round the table." Sometimes, when in a martial mood, he likened his sons to arrows in the hand of a warrior; but at the same time he also spoke with pride of the health and beauty of his daughters, comparing them to "corner pillars hewn out as figures."<sup>12</sup> In the description of Job's wealth and greatness the writer has a word of praise for the beauty of the daughters whose names alone are given, although it may not be entirely without significance that the numerical proportion of daughters to sons is three to seven. Similarly, the prophet, in drawing the picture of the future

happy state of Jerusalem when its streets will be filled by playing children, goes out of his way to make special mention of the girls.<sup>13</sup> It would be easy to multiply instances like these, but sufficient has been said to show that in the Jewish family of those early days there was little discrimination between the boy and the girl, and that as far as parental love is concerned both seem to have been in a rather happy position.

## II

But parental love, although a natural law, is the parents' gift rather than the child's right, and, as the experience of humanity has shown, it has never proved a sufficient protection for the child, even against his own parents. From the earliest times down to the present day the law, religious and civil, has always found it necessary to intervene on behalf of the child in one form or another. If any evidence were required for this, the Bible furnishes it in abundance, as we shall presently see.

Exposure, or abandonment of unwanted children, a common practice in the ancient world, never spread among Jews. The stories of Hagar and Moses show some traces of this practice, and a more definite reference to it may be seen in Ezekiel's harsh allegory of the origin of the Jewish people, which contains the features usually found in the stories of the exposure and accidental saving of undesired children. The Psalmist may also have had this practice in mind when he said, "My father and my mother have abandoned me, but the Lord will take me up."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, Jeremiah, in describing an exceptionally severe drought, speaks of the hind in the field abandoning its offspring: the exposure of children even during a famine did not apparently occur to him. Nor does the writer of Lamentations mention it in his description of the horrors

of the siege, although he has much to say of the suffering of children even at the hands of their own mothers.<sup>15</sup> It is quite safe to conclude that, although isolated instances might have occurred, the idea of the exposure of children never took hold among Jews. The Jewish view of the child as a gift from God, combined with the economic conditions of an agricultural community where every child meant an additional worker, made Palestine unfavourable ground for such a custom. It was the besetting sin of the Hellenistic world, where social and economic conditions, and especially the institution of slavery, favoured its development. But by the time the Jews came in contact with Hellenism prophecy had already done its work, and this work, as will be shown later, affected deeply the general attitude to the child.

But whilst the Jewish child of the earlier biblical period was safe from abandonment, he was, like the children of many other peoples of those times, threatened by an even more terrible fate: to be offered up as a sacrifice to some deity. And not all his parents' love would be a sufficient protection against that danger. On the contrary, the greater the love, the more acceptable the sacrifice and the more efficacious in gaining the favour or averting the wrath of some powerful but cruel god. This is the implication of the well-known story of "the binding of Isaac." His escape in the nick of time was, it would seem, at least partly due to the circumstance of his being an only son. The fact that she was an only child is also stressed in the story of Jephtha's daughter, but even this did not save her.<sup>16</sup> The danger to the child would be all the greater if he was a first-born; but the gods had apparently some special claim also upon the youngest. It may be said that no child was entirely safe from this practice, which was widespread amongst the Semitic as amongst other races.<sup>17</sup>

The biblical references to child-sacrifice are too numerous

to be mentioned here. They cover the whole period from the Patriarchs to the Captivity. Both the author of Isaiah lvii. as well as Ezekiel deal with it, the latter reverting to it in three separate prophecies with a vehemence which betokens recent, if not contemporary, happenings. How recent the practice was is evident from the passionate outburst of Jeremiah, who foretells a terrible fate for the people as a punishment for this particular crime.<sup>18</sup> The cases of Ahaz and Manasseh are singled out not because they were exceptional, but on account of their especial seriousness: the king setting an evil example to the people.<sup>19</sup> That this horrible custom was by no means uncommon appears clearly from the prophetic writers as well as from the legislative codes. One passage, in Leviticus, chapter xx. is of particular significance in this respect. It decrees the death penalty by stoning for the man who sacrifices his child to Molech. But the writer is aware that "the people of the land" may not regard such a man as a criminal and therefore "hide their eyes" from him and let him go free. He therefore warns them that God Himself will set His face against such a man and will cut him off from amongst the people.

It is a good illustration of what Professor Stevenson describes as "the distinction between the traditional beliefs and practices of the mass of the people and the higher religion which was chiefly represented by the prophets."<sup>20</sup> It gives us some idea of the uphill fight carried on by the leaders of Jewish religious thought against the prevailing barbarism and of the part played by these leaders in the struggle for the liberation of the child.

Even being made a sacrifice was not, it would appear, the worst that could happen to a child. If certain biblical texts are to be taken at their face value it seems to have been possible during times of acute distress for fathers and even mothers to kill their children for food. The Bible contains

six passages of this kind, two of these purporting to describe actual occurrences.<sup>21</sup> One of the latter tells us of a bargain entered into by two mothers to slaughter—and boil!—their respective sons on successive days and share their flesh. The common characteristic of all these texts is that they deal with the same kind of situation: siege and famine. Cases of cannibalism in conditions of extreme necessity, such as siege or shipwreck, were not unknown even in much later times. Some such isolated incidents may have occurred during the siege of Samaria or Jerusalem. Josephus, it will be remembered, records with considerable circumstantial detail an occurrence of this kind during the siege of Jerusalem by Titus, although, curiously enough, he overlooks the biblical precedents. This horrible act, he tells us, “unheard of among Barbarians and Greeks,” produced a terrifying sensation even amongst the Zealots, whose inhumanity he paints in the darkest colours.<sup>22</sup> The writer of Kings also speaks of the “sensation” created: “When the king heard the words of the woman, he rent his garments” and determined to take action. But the atmosphere is markedly different from that which we find in Josephus. It reflects the conditions of an age when the child had not yet acquired any rights, not even the right to his own life.

The greatest danger to child life was the incessant tribal warfare. The destruction of the enemy’s infants and sucklings, perhaps especially the males, seems to have been a widespread practice. It may have been prompted not so much by sheer cruelty as by an anxiety to prevent future blood-revenge, which made the position all the worse for the child. One cannot read without a shock such phrases as “dashing the little ones to pieces,” or “breaking them against the rock.”<sup>23</sup> Yet recent history has known similar incidents, and most modern warfare seems to hold as little promise for the child as that of primitive times.

## III

The Babylonian captivity was a turning-point in the history of Judaism, but perhaps in no sphere of life was the change from pre-exilic conditions more marked than in the position of the child. If the attitude to childhood may be taken as an index of social progress, then the advance shown by the post-exilic community is very remarkable indeed. In the earlier times the child was a possession, the property of his father, who could deal with him as he dealt with his other possessions. "The fruit of the body and the fruit of the cattle and the fruit of the ground" simply, almost naturally, come together in the literature of the time, whether in blessings or in curses.<sup>24</sup> The Jewish father probably never possessed "the exclusive, absolute, and perpetual" dominion over his children which was peculiar to Roman law; yet he too could sell them, give them away in discharge of a debt, and in the earliest time, it would seem, even put them to death for reasons of his own.<sup>25</sup> In the relations between father and child it is the former's interests that are invariably considered: his love or his hate; his joy or his mourning; his loss or his gain. The idea that the child may have rights and interests of his own, even when life and death are concerned, had not yet dawned upon the mass of the people. A striking illustration is furnished by one incident in the story of Joseph. Reuben pleads with Jacob to entrust Benjamin to his charge so that he may take him down to Egypt. To reassure his aged father he says to him: "Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee."<sup>26</sup> If he causes pain to Jacob by depriving him of a valued possession, he is prepared to have pain inflicted upon himself through being deprived of similar valued possessions. The thought that either Benjamin or the sons of Reuben may be entitled to have a say in the matter does not apparently occur to anyone.

To understand the position more clearly it should be remembered that the family as a whole, and not the individual human being, was regarded as the social and religious unit. Within the family every member was responsible for every other, this responsibility extending beyond the confines of one generation. When Achan "committed a trespass in the devoted thing"—the "Herem"—he brought destruction upon all his household; and the sons of Saul had to give their lives to expiate their father's guilt.<sup>27</sup> But the family was presided over by the father, who wielded absolute power over all its members—at least until they were grown up. This smaller unit formed, in its turn, part of a larger one, the tribe, or the people, where again the members were responsible for one another "unto the third and the fourth generation." In neither unit was there room for the individual's freedom or his moral responsibility: he was swallowed up by the family or submerged by the tribe.

It took many ages and the indomitable work of a remarkable succession of men like Jeremiah and Ezekiel before the citadel of primitive tribalism was shaken and the idea of individual moral responsibility began to take hold of the people's mind. How firmly rooted the ancient outlook was even as late as the Captivity is evidenced by Ezekiel's impetuous attacks. Again and again, in dealing with this subject, he exclaims: "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not equal.' Hear now, O house of Israel, is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal?" Jeremiah's plaintive musings about the established view have developed into a fierce conviction that it must be destroyed.<sup>28</sup> Even if we adopt the view, forcibly argued by Professor Stevenson,<sup>28a</sup> that the prophet thinks in terms of individual generations rather than individual human beings, Ezekiel's work was an essential stage in the development of the conception of the free personality, one of the most valuable

contributions of Judaism to human civilisation. It paved the way for such a book as Job, with its passionate protest on behalf of the ordinary human being who is torn by the conflict between faith in individual justice and ignorance of its working. The solution of the conflict was thereafter sought along two different lines: on the one hand it led the disillusioned few to the pessimistic egoism of Ecclesiastes, who reached an almost complete negative in his social and moral speculations; and on the other to the belief in life after death, which became widely accepted by the masses of the people. With this the conception of the free, morally responsible human personality reached its final stage and became the predominant element in Jewish social thought. It found an almost perfect expression in the well-known rabbinical saying: "He who saves one human life it is accounted to him as if he has saved a whole universe."<sup>29</sup> And this idea of the sacredness of life, of its being an ultimate value given by God and not dependent upon any external conditions, applied to the new-born child as to the full-grown man.<sup>30</sup> Hence the remarkable fact, which has not yet received its due recognition in the history of education, that the child in the Jewish community achieved his human rights, the unquestioned right to his own life, centuries earlier than in the Hellenistic world, where exposing was not considered a capital crime until the sixth century C.E.<sup>31</sup> This is all the more remarkable when one remembers that in Palestine itself, during the Roman period, abandonment of children was quite common amongst the non-Jewish elements of the mixed towns.<sup>32</sup> Only when the Jewish view of the sanctity of life had, through the medium of Christianity, penetrated into the wider world was the monster of infanticide in its various ugly forms finally destroyed.<sup>33</sup>

## IV

The Greeks and the Jews differed fundamentally in their political and social ideals, and, as a natural consequence of that, also in their attitude to the child. It is more than a mere coincidence that at about the same time when the greatest thinker of classical Greece, Plato, formulated his theory of the state which demanded the complete submergence of the individual, the nameless Jewish writer of Job made the most fervent plea ever uttered on behalf of this same individual. The Greek thinker, at least in theory, knew of no distinction between conscience and public duty; the man, to him, was lost in the citizen. And Hellenistic education, in theory and in practice, sought the good of the community, not the good of the individual. "The state," Aristotle teaches us, "is by nature prior to the family and to the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part." In the last analysis, as Professor Zimmern rightly says, "the weakness of Greek political speculation can be traced back to the weakness of Greek religion."<sup>34</sup> Among the Jews of post-exilic times the idea of the state, even during the lifetime of the independent monarchy, never rose to exclusive importance. There was another factor—religion, which steadily grew more powerful until, in the period following the Roman wars, it completely dominated Jewish life and thought. The child was not devoted to the service of the state, but, in rabbinical language, "consecrated to the Torah." In an education system animated by such an aim individuality could never be lost sight of. The individual human being was not turned into raw material for the advancement of the abstract idea of the state or the community.

To what extent the Jews have ever been a politically-minded people cannot be fully discussed here. But one suggestive fact may be mentioned. When in 63 B.C.E.

deputations from the two brothers Hyrcanus and Aristobulus waited upon Pompey in Damascus to decide between their respective claims to the throne, there was also another deputation there asking for the abolition of royalty and the restoration of the old priestly constitution. These were representatives of the Pharisees who renounced the claims to political independence and would be satisfied with a religious community.<sup>35</sup> That they represented a prominent body of Jewish opinion is proved by the subsequent course of Jewish history. After 135 C.E. those elements formulated a new ideal of life, religious instead of political, and saved the Jewish people from extinction. It is significant that their opponents, the Sadducees, who were influenced by Hellenistic political theory, had no use for the conception of life after death: the individual man had no existence for them apart from the member of the state.

How the Jewish educationist in the Talmudic period dealt with the problems of the relation of the individual to the community has been discussed more fully in another chapter. Here it is only necessary to say that he strove to harmonise the claims of the two rather than to exalt the one at the expense of the other. It may be true that whilst the Greek theorist pitched the demands of the state too high, the Jewish thinker sometimes pitched them too low; yet he was always careful not to over-emphasise the value of individuality. We may sum up his view by saying that he denied perfection even to Moses,<sup>36</sup> whilst insisting at the same time on the sanctity and uniqueness of the humblest life.

The following from the Talmud is characteristic in this connection. "Rav Shesheth (a scholar of the beginning of the fourth century) used to revise his studies every thirty days, after which he leaned against the handle of the door and said, 'Rejoice, my soul; for thy good did I learn the Bible; for thy good did I learn the Mishnah.'" The

Talmud apparently feels the crudity of this extreme individualism and asks, "But surely this is not right; for did not Rabbi Eleazar say, 'But for the Torah heaven and earth would have no existence'?"—that is, the aim of study must be the benefit of the whole community. To this the answer is given, "But at the beginning he studied for his own sake"—the community derived the benefit automatically.<sup>37</sup> Four hundred years previously, Hillel, one of the founders of rabbinical Judaism, formulated his solution of the eternal problem in the well-known saying: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me? But if I am for myself alone, what am I?"<sup>38</sup> Translated into modern language this amounts to saying that whilst individuality is the fundamental fact of life, the individual can achieve his self-realisation only in the social activities of the community. This also is perhaps an imperfect solution, but a more satisfactory one is yet to come. Another builder of rabbinical Judaism, a man who did not shrink from the supreme sacrifice for a social ideal, expressed the same thought in a significant statement: "Beloved is man, created in the image of God; beloved are Israel who were given charge of the Torah." But it will be noted that "man" comes first.<sup>39</sup>

## CHAPTER XX

### THE CHILD AT HOME

I.—Ben-Sira's views on the treatment of the child. The views of Proverbs and other biblical books. II.—The new attitude in the Talmud. Children's toys and games. The influence of religious ceremonial and symbolism. III.—Yet the régime at home was often of a stern nature. Frequent punishments. Illustrations from rabbinical literature. Flogging as a "preventive" measure. Similar incidents among other peoples. The relations between parents and children. "Fear" and "honour" of parents.

### I

" He that loveth his son will continue to lay strokes upon him,  
That he may rejoice over him at the last.  
He that disciplineth his son shall have satisfaction of him,  
And among his acquaintance glory in him.

\* \* \* \* \*

He that pampereth his son shall bind up his wounds<sup>1</sup>  
And his heart trembleth at every cry.  
An unbroken horse becometh stubborn  
And a son left at large becometh headstrong.  
Cocker thy son and he will terrify thee;  
Play with him and he will grieve thee.  
Laugh not with him, lest he vex thee,  
And make thee gnash thy teeth at the last.  
Let him not have freedom in his youth,  
And overlook not his mischievous acts.  
Bow down his neck in his youth  
And smite his loins sore while he is little,  
Lest he become stubborn and rebel against thee.

\* \* \* \* \*

Discipline thy son and make his yoke heavy,  
Lest in his folly he stumble."<sup>2</sup>

THIS is a good summary of the "wisdom of the ancients" on the eternal problem of the child. A problem it cer-

tainly was, or the moralists would not have returned to it again and again as they did. But the solution was apparently everywhere the same; Athens, Rome, and Jerusalem showing a remarkable unanimity, apart from some minor local differences. Ben-Sira has no new ideas on the subject. The writer of Proverbs preached the same wisdom before him. Indeed, this may be said to be one of the few "theories" on which the Bible shows absolute consistency. "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth"—thus the writer of Lamentations.<sup>3</sup> A father who fails to put the yoke on his son has himself to thank for the evil consequences to which this is bound to lead. Adonijah rebelled against David because he was a pampered child and "his father never displeased him saying, 'Why hast thou done so?'" David, of course, was a "soft" father, as witness his attitude to Absalom. So was Eli, who failed to "restrain" his sons—with disastrous consequences to himself and his family.<sup>4</sup> The wise father, and one who really loves his children, will not miss the lesson of these historical incidents. He will suppress his own feelings and show his children a stern face. He will demand from them respect and strict obedience.<sup>5</sup> Children are often foolish and recalcitrant.<sup>6</sup> Only the rod will keep them on the right path. A good beating will not kill a boy. It will, on the other hand, "drive out" his natural foolishness and save his soul from hell. More than that, it will even produce positive results: it will impart "wisdom." It is true that a rebuke will sometimes be sufficient for the sensible boy. But there are others whose foolishness "will not depart even if you bray them in a mortar with a pestle." The rod is the most hopeful means of correction, whilst one can hardly rely on the effectiveness of mere talk.<sup>7</sup>

This may be said to be a fair representation of the views of the average Jewish parent as they are reflected in such a

book as Proverbs, or Ben-Sira, which merely reiterates the same thoughts in different words. The indirect hints we get in other books of the Bible are entirely consistent with these views. But there is hardly anything peculiarly biblical or Jewish about these ideas on discipline. They express the practical "psychology" of the man-in-the-street throughout the ages and all over the world. "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself causeth shame to his mother," teaches us the author of Proverbs. "A man unflogged is a man untrained," says Menander, perhaps a little more crudely.<sup>8</sup> "A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the back of fools," says the writer of Proverbs sagely. Ben-Sira, as often, merely repeats this thought in a different and less effective style. "An unbroken horse becometh stubborn, and a son left at large becometh headstrong." But it was left to an Englishman of recent times to put this trite idea in quite elegant verse: "Students, like horses on the road, must be well lash'd before they can take the load. They may be willing for a time to run, but you must whip them ere the work be done."

How much the Bible was responsible for the spread of such ideas is a different question. That it had its influence on the training of children, both among Jews and Christians, there can be little doubt. The world's childhood owes a great many floggings to such a saying as: "He that spareth the rod hateth his son." Epigrams of this kind which are regarded as crystallising in verbal form the collective social wisdom of past generations may play an important part in shaping men's reactions, especially when they appear to give sanction to a natural impulse.<sup>9</sup> This is what seems to have happened in our case: the biblical epigram supplied a justification for the natural harsh tendency in the training of children which was common amongst all nations down to most recent times.

## II

Progress in the views on the nature of childhood has been painfully slow among Jews as among other peoples until almost our own days, when humanity seems to have made a sudden leap forward. But progress there has been all the time, and it is a fascinating study to trace the almost imperceptible, halting steps by which the child has advanced to his emancipation. A comparison of rabbinical and biblical literature will reveal one of these steps.

The Talmud, as is to be expected from its size and the wide range of the topics dealt with in its pages, affords us much more abundant material than the Bible for the study of our subject. But it is not the quantity that matters—although even this is not without its significance—but the unmistakably new attitude which we find there. A suggestion of this change of attitude is already contained in such a book as *Tobit* with its moving description of the relations between father and son. It is even more strongly felt in the atmosphere of the New Testament, where the child is always approached with tenderness and sympathy. But it is the Talmud with its abundance of detail that enables us to see how this new attitude was translated into practice. “A child,” we are told by a rabbi of the second century C.E., “is to be repelled with the left hand and attracted with the right.”<sup>10</sup> In this saying the child forms one of a group of three. The other two are: the natural instincts, which are not to be entirely suppressed but must be allowed a certain amount of free play; and the woman, who since the times of the Bible had gained in legal position but lost in social status, and who was usually regarded as a light-minded, irresponsible creature.<sup>11</sup>

Now, that “right hand” was a new departure in the relations between the adult world and the child. In the Bible the child is mostly loved, sometimes hated, seldom under-

stood. Methods of discipline are usually of a negative kind: suppression and restraint by means of the rod. At the best restraint takes the form of rebuke. In the Talmud we meet for the first time with the effort to understand the child, to awaken his interest, to win his active sympathy. This was a concession wrung out by childhood, ever-assertive and irrepressible, from the adult world.

The term by which the child is usually denoted in the Talmud shows already the difference in attitude. The somewhat prosaic biblical words for "child," "youth," or "son" have given place to the warmer and more intimate "suckling" and "the little one." "Childhood," a Talmudic teacher tells us, "is a crown of roses"; and another wistfully adds: "Alas! it goes never to return."<sup>12</sup> We read of a considerable variety of children's toys, of which there seems to be no mention in the Bible, except, perhaps, in the matter of dress.<sup>13</sup> Thus we find "the chair of the little one," the "wooden horse," special helmets used by children when playing at soldiers, and, of course, the ubiquitous ball. This "new spirit" sometimes found its expression in curious ways. We read, for instance, of a rabbi who bought earthenware dishes for his children to play with—in order to satisfy their impulse for breaking things!<sup>14</sup>

Fathers were even expected to take an active share in their children's amusements, especially on the Sabbaths and the festivals when they were free from work. We find frequent references to the child riding on his father's shoulders, which seems to have been a general practice. We have even a case of a scholar who was discovered by his colleagues, who came to consult him on some legal matter, in the act of crawling on all fours to amuse his children.<sup>15</sup> In more recent times, as has been shown before, such behaviour on the part of a rabbi would have been considered most unbecoming.

In order to attract the little ones to the Synagogue, bells

were attached to the wrappers of the scrolls of the Law. Such bells were sometimes also fastened to a baby's cradle in order to soothe it to sleep.<sup>16</sup> One legend tells us of a pretty custom, which obtained at least in one place, to plant a cedar at the birth of a boy and a cypress at the birth of a girl. Later on when the children grew up and were to be married planks were taken from these trees to make the canopy for the wedding ceremony.<sup>17</sup>

Children then, as at all times, were apt to indulge in mischief, and the Talmud contains numerous indirect references to their pranks and tricks. They play with sheep in the field and mischievously tie their tails together—reminding us of the escapade of Samson; they tease cats and get badly scratched so that a special leather cover for the chest has to be devised for them. Sometimes they expose themselves to greater dangers: they fall into the sea, into pits, go away far from town and are attacked by beasts of prey. Once a special fast was proclaimed by the elders in Jerusalem because two children were devoured by wolves in Trans-Jordania. Regular feasts were also held for the sake of children who suffered from digestive ailments.<sup>18</sup> Little gifts of dainties were distributed among children on various occasions. These usually took the form of parched wheat, honey, and especially nuts, on which, according to the Talmud, children are very keen. At least in one case we read of fish as a special prize for good behaviour!<sup>19</sup>

But, in addition to such direct means, there was the indirect but infinitely more powerful influence exercised on the child by the rich symbolism and ceremonial of religious life as it developed in the Talmudic period. The Sabbath, the festivals and the fasts, with the wealth of tradition that had grown around them even at that early period; the Synagogue and the home ritual, all appealed to the child's imagination, and in all the child was encouraged to play an active part. Much of this ritual, as,

for instance, the outstanding example of the Passover night, was directly designed with this aim in view. These were educational influences of a positive nature, of which the Bible has hardly a glimpse. They were not based on a clearly formulated theory of the place of interest in education, but on a more intimate and sympathetic understanding of the nature of childhood.

### III

It would, however, be rash to conclude from the preceding discussion that the Jewish child in Talmudic times, any more than his Greek or Roman contemporary, was allowed to lead a "soft" life. On the contrary, there is sufficient evidence to show that the régime under which children lived, both at home and at school, was often of a stern nature. Using the Talmudic simile of the left and right hands, one would be right in saying that the left, as with some pugilists, was at times the heavier.

In commenting on the popular verse which has served throughout the ages as the charter of the floggers, "He who spares his rod, hateth his son," the rabbis ask: "Is there a man who hates his son?" The answer is that if he forbears from chastising his son, he will encourage him in his bad habits and will end by hating him.<sup>20</sup> It was an accepted idea that a man must "put fear" into the hearts of the members of his household, although he is warned against overdoing it. How this domestic "frightfulness" was practised we are shown by several examples of scholars who went the length of throwing and breaking things!<sup>21</sup>

Indulgence, especially in the matter of food, was strongly discouraged, "because it leads to sin." A father is obliged to maintain his children whilst they are young, but he must not accustom them to such luxuries as meat and wine.<sup>22</sup> Punishments were frequent and sometimes severe

in the extreme. In the course of a discussion on the duties of a son the view is expressed that a child usually stands in greater fear of his teacher than of his father. Various recorded incidents seem to show, however, that in real life this was not always the case.

“Once the son of Gorgias of Lydda ran away from school and his father threatened him. The boy took fright and committed suicide by throwing himself into a well.” It is interesting to compare this with the story of the truant boy in the third mime of Herondas. There the mother brings him to the teacher, who inflicts on him a savage flogging. The Jewish father apparently stood in no need of the teacher’s help when he had to deal with such a case.

Another story, found in the same place, is no less significant. “Once a child in Bene-Berak broke a glass on the Sabbath (thus being guilty of the desecration of the holy day), and his father threatened him. So the boy took fright and threw himself into a well.”<sup>23</sup> These were obviously exceptional cases of highly-strung or neurotic children, but they throw some light on the nature of the home discipline to which the child was subjected. On the basis of these facts the following rule is formulated for the guidance of parents and teachers: “One must not threaten a child, but either punish him at once, or pass the offence over in silence and say nothing.”<sup>24</sup> The modern teacher would express his full agreement with this rule.

These incidents belong to an early period. But there are numerous indirect references in later literature to floggings inflicted by a father upon his son. “The flogging father” is, in fact, quite a standing phrase. From repeated warnings against it one is entitled to infer that even grown-up sons were not immune from corporal punishment.<sup>25</sup>

The infliction of punishment was not, however, the prerogative of the father alone. We hear occasionally also of

mothers who performed that duty.<sup>26</sup> But it was generally recognised that a "boy fears his father more than his mother." The reason is rather significant: "because his father teaches him the Torah."<sup>27</sup> Evidently learning the Torah was not always a pleasurable activity. This is confirmed in another place where we are told that when a man teaches his son the Torah, he should teach him with sternness. A rule going back to the second century c.e. makes a distinction in this respect between junior and senior children, if we are to use the modern terminology. "Up till twelve years a man should deal leniently with his son; after that age he should adopt stern measures," if he is unwilling to learn.<sup>28</sup>

According to one opinion, a father who killed his son in the process of chastisement was not to be held responsible for his action, as he merely fulfilled his duty of directing him in the right way. The same law applied to the teacher also. In a discussion on this point a scholar of the fourth century c.e. gives it as his view that even if the boy is a willing student it is still the father's—and presumably also the teacher's—duty to chastise him, evidently as a preventive measure!<sup>29</sup> This, as is seen from the context, is merely a debating point. But it is strongly reminiscent of the story of the Christian saint who, whilst a boy, was punished by his teacher every morning. The idea was that, although the boy had not deserved the punishment yet, he was sure to deserve it some time; the chastisement was therefore merely in the nature of payment in advance.

It is only fair to the ancients to say that there were teachers many centuries later who quite independently conceived the idea of flogging not as a punishment for an offence, nor as a means of reform, but as an end in itself. Erasmus was flogged on this principle. His master, with whom he was a favourite, flogged him just to see how he could bear the pain. Of the same master it is said that

whenever he dined in his school, one or two boys were served up to be flogged by way of dessert. A meek, gentle boy was flogged by him on one of these occasions for some pretended fault till the victim was fainting under the scourge, "not that he deserved this," said the master to Erasmus, "but—it was fit to humble him." Yet this teacher was said to have been a good man who delighted in children.<sup>30</sup> From the latter part of the nineteenth century we have a story by a well-known Jewish humorist, whose teacher also struck the idea of "payment in advance" and made it a rule to flog his pupil every morning.

The picture of the relations of parents and children in Talmudic times would not be complete without the following extracts. These should not, however, be taken as descriptive of real conditions, but rather as a striving after the ideal.

"There are three partners in man: the Holy One, blessed be He; the father; and the mother. When a man honours his father and his mother, the Holy One, blessed be He, says: 'I consider it as if I had lived amongst them and the honour was done to Myself.'"

In commenting upon the biblical verses which enjoin the fear and the honour of parents, the rabbis ask: "What is 'fear' and what is 'honour'? 'Fear' means that one must not stand or sit in the place which is usually the father's; nor must one contradict him, or even induce him to reach a decision when he is in doubt; 'honour' means that the father is to be provided with food and drink, clothing and bed-coverings, and to be led in and out of the house."<sup>31</sup>

Many stories are told by the rabbis of the manner in which certain outstanding people treated their parents. Some of these are quite obviously of a legendary nature, but the following two are not without interest. Rabbi Tarphon, a famous teacher of the early second century, had an old mother. Whenever she wanted to go up to bed, he

bent down so that she might step on him. The same he did when she had to come down from bed. When he came to the Synagogue and boasted about it, he was told: "You have not done even half of what is necessary for the fulfilment of the commandment to honour parents." Rab Joseph, a blind scholar of the end of the third and beginning of the fourth centuries, when he heard his mother's footsteps, used to say: "Let me rise before the divine presence that is about to enter." And it should be remembered that the mother usually took the second place.<sup>32</sup>

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL LIFE OF THE CHILD

I.—Religion was co-extensive with life. The child's first years at home. "Outward" signs. Symbols designed to arouse the child's curiosity. II.—The festivals. The Sabbath—Pentecost—New Year—the Day of Atonement—Tabernacles—Passover. III.—The school and the Synagogue. The community's interest in the boy's education. "Tell me your verse."

#### I

THE Jewish child of the Talmudic age was gradually accustomed to all those practices and observances which were obligatory upon the adult.<sup>1</sup> This applied to the home and the school as well as to the Synagogue. The sharp distinction between the religious and the secular, which often renders futile the best efforts of the modern teacher of religion, was not known then. Religion was not confined to certain hours and to certain places; and nothing would have been stranger to the minds of those people than special lessons devoted to it. It was co-extensive with life and controlled every action of man.

From birth the child grew up in this intense religious atmosphere which pervaded the home no less than the Synagogue. As soon as he began to crawl about he could not fail to notice the symbolic sign on the doorpost, about which he would presently ask his eager questions. This was only the beginning of an extraordinarily elaborate system of symbolism which would gradually unfold itself before him, making an ever stronger appeal to his native curiosity. Most of these symbols, although he did not know it, were specially designed with a view to arous-

ing his interest and eliciting his questions. Perhaps on his first venturing outside, in the courtyard, he would come across other signs, in connection with some sabbatical regulations, which were kept alive only for his sake.<sup>2</sup>

Soon he would be taken to the Synagogue. That would be before his school career had begun.<sup>3</sup> There he would have innumerable questions to ask about the curious things which he saw for the first time: the pulpit, the ark, the scrolls, the bells on the wrappers of these, which ring whenever they are raised—again for his benefit.<sup>4</sup>

## II

But his most vivid impressions would be associated with the festivals and fasts, of which every one made its peculiar appeal to his imagination, and in most of which there was a special part reserved for him.

There was first of all the weekly day of rest and peace—the Sabbath, with the changed appearance of the house, with the different clothes and special meals, with the lights and the cup of wine for “sanctification.” Even if his father were very poor he would contrive to obtain at least that.<sup>5</sup> His father might perhaps tell him something from the story of the Creation, which he had probably heard already many times, but still loved to hear again; also some of the legendary tales connected with the holy day.<sup>6</sup>

Besides such festivals as Pentecost, the main interest of which consisted in the story connected with it, there were others offering him opportunities for a more active part. There was the New Year with its air of solemnity, relieved perhaps by the “blowing of the horn.” If considered clever enough, he would himself get a chance of trying it, or even of practising it.<sup>7</sup> Then there came the “Day of Atonement.” He was not expected to fast the

whole day; but he would show his manliness by waiting as long as possible for his first meal.<sup>8</sup>

With the feeling of pride which this manly deed had aroused in him still fresh, he entered upon the preparations for the great festival of Tabernacles, with the building of the booth, in which he would strive to do more than his share. His father would tell him the story of the wanderings in the wilderness. He would even allow him to handle the citron and shake the "palm branch" as the grown-ups were doing.<sup>9</sup>

But best of all he loved the festival of Passover, to which he had been looking forward during the whole winter. There was a complete change in the house for a whole week; different dishes, different food, and a wealth of signs and symbols every one connected with a fascinating story. In the elaborate ceremonial of the first evening he was the chief actor and all the arrangements were made for his sake. All sorts of expedients would be employed to arouse his interest and to make him ask questions. And, in answer, his father would tell the story of the miraculous departure from Egypt—a story which he had heard so many times but could not grow tired of. He would certainly try to ask clever and unexpected questions and not be like other boys who had to be taught by their fathers what to ask.<sup>10</sup>

### III

Meantime his school life had begun. Early in the morning his mother<sup>11</sup> would take him to school, which was in the Synagogue. There he would spend the whole day. He would see the services of the grown-ups, who were saying the same prayers that he was learning from his teacher, and he would feel that he was learning something of real value. He would soon begin the Pentateuch, and, if clever enough, would be given a chance, during the Synagogue service on

the Sabbath, of reading the Scripture lesson which he had studied the whole week. His father and his teacher would be present,<sup>12</sup> and perhaps also his mother—looking on from the women's part of the Synagogue.

Sometimes people came into the Synagogue and asked him the verse he had memorised that day.<sup>13</sup> More often that would happen when he would be on his way home from school after a very long and hard day's work. Yet he was glad of the opportunity to say "his verse." For he would soon learn that people did not do it merely in order to test his knowledge, but for a more serious purpose: to decide their own affairs, sometimes of a rather important nature, according to the meaning of the verse. They would treat his verse as a prophecy.<sup>14</sup> It might very well happen that the great rabbi himself, who was the head of the whole community, and to whom everybody paid such great respect, would meet him, ask him for his verse, and perhaps commend him for the manner in which he had acquitted himself.<sup>15</sup>

After such a meeting he would feel rather proud and well satisfied with his day's work, which, though long and hard, was never dull or entirely devoid of adventure.



## **APPENDICES**



## APPENDIX I

### NOTE ON CHAPTER V

THERE are a number of well-known Talmudic texts which apparently conflict with the conclusions reached in this chapter as regards the venue of the elementary school as well as its historical development in general. These texts are of a legendary character and can hardly be treated as historical documents, except for one which is of a more serious nature. The former will be dealt with first.

Sabbath, 31a. "Again it happened that a certain non-Jew passed behind a 'house of study'—'Beth Hamidrash'—and heard the voice of a teacher—'sopher'—who said, 'And these are the garments which they shall make' (for the high priest, Exod. xxviii. 4). So he came to Shammai and said to him, 'Convert me to Judaism on condition that you make me high priest,' etc. Rashi explains that "sopher" means an elementary teacher.

If taken at its face-value, it would prove that in the time of Shammai and Hillel, that is in the first century B.C.E., children were taught in the "Beth-Hamidrash"—a term which really means not the elementary school but the high school. But this story belongs to a cycle of legends about Hillel and clearly has no historic value.

Taanith, 23b. A long and rather interesting story about the grandson of Honi Hameaggel, first century B.C.E. To the question why he gave one piece of bread to his older son and two to the younger, he answered, "The older stays at home and the younger in the Synagogue." Here, too, Rashi explains: "Before the teacher, and does not come home all day." This again belongs to a series of legends

about Honi, a favourite subject for all kinds of fanciful tales. It reflects the conditions of a much later age.

Gittin, 58a. "There were 400 synagogues in the town of Bethar (the fortress where Bar-Kochba made his last stand; fell about 135 c.e.). In every one of these there were 400 elementary teachers; every one of those had before him 400 pupils," etc. Although the tradition is reported in the name of Simon ben Gamaliel, second century c.e., it is on the face of it too fantastic to be treated seriously. It must have originated much later when the Synagogue was already the communal centre and the usual home of the school. It is rather interesting to compare this with the Greek story about the murder of school-children by Thracian mercenaries, quoted by Mahaffy ("Old Greek Education," 48).

A more serious objection to the writer's views on the relation of the Synagogue and the school may be raised on the strength of an early but somewhat obscure Mishnah on Sabbath. It states as follows: "Verily, they said, the *hazzan*' may look on where the children read on Friday evening, but he may not read himself"—for fear of inadvertently adjusting the candle. Rashi gives two alternative explanations of the meaning of "*hazzan*." According to the first, he is the Synagogue official in charge of the liturgical readings from the Bible, who looks on at the children reading in the Synagogue on Friday evening so as to make sure which lesson from the Scriptures is to be read during the service on the following day. According to the other explanation, the "*hazzan*" is the teacher who looks up the lesson his pupils are to do on the morrow. Maimonides and others explain the passage in a somewhat similar manner. The views of the modern writers may be summed up in the words of A. R. S. Kennedy, in "*Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible*": "By all writers on Jewish education it is stated that the Synagogue officer . . . was the

teacher of the Synagogue school. This uniform tradition seems founded on a precept regarding Sabbath observance in the Mishnah . . . where even on the sacred day the 'hazzan' is allowed to look on where the children are reading, but he may not read himself." He then goes on to make a distinction between two kinds of "hazzan," one a Synagogue official, the other a teacher.

Now if this were correct it would afford strong proof that in the early Mishnaic period the school was already very intimately associated with the Synagogue, where it was usually housed. It is necessary first of all to point out that the "uniform tradition" of which Dr. Kennedy speaks rests on a very flimsy foundation—this solitary and obscure passage. Nowhere else in the Talmud, although the word occurs frequently, does "hazzan" denote a teacher. It usually means either the Synagogue official or the executive officer attached to the court of justice. The name for a teacher was in the earlier period "sopher," or "melamed tinokoth," these terms later on changing to their Aramaic equivalents. The truth would seem to be that the Mishnah does not speak of an actual lesson taking place in the Synagogue on Friday evening. Surely it would be an extraordinary sort of lesson with the pupils reading and the teacher forbidden to do so! All that the passage says is that the "hazzan" who is in charge of the Synagogue service may look up the scroll on a Friday evening to ascertain the portions of the Bible studied by the children in their teacher's home that week, so that he may arrange the liturgical readings accordingly. He may do only that, but is not allowed to read.

On the other hand, in a somewhat similar passage a few pages later we read that school-children used to arrange the portions of the Bible and read by the light of a candle on Friday evening. But here it is not simply "children," but "children of their teacher's house"—"tinokoth shel beth

rabban." The significance of this expression, which in later times came to be applied to all school-children, should not be lost. It shows clearly that in the early stages of its growth the school was not held in the Synagogue, but in the teacher's house. (See also *Tosephta*, edition Schwarz, Sabbath, chapter i.)

The question why the school is not mentioned before the New Testament, and even there only once, is not, therefore, due to the fact "that the school was so intimately associated with the Synagogue that in ordinary speech the two were not distinguished" (G. H. B. in "Cheyne's Dict. of the Bib." art. *Educ.*). The explanation is simpler. It is that the school at that early period was a private institution in the initial stage of its growth, and as yet of little prominence in the people's life. Its real growth began some time in the second century c.e. It did not become identified with the Synagogue until after the Mishnaic period—that is, after 200 c.e.

## APPENDIX II

### NOTES ON CHAPTER VII

#### THE CURRICULUM OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IN THE TALMUDIC PERIOD

1. The following observations may help us to gain a clearer idea of this subject of which little has so far been done in the way of systematic study. The term "Talmudic period" is very wide and is sometimes used by writers in a rather indefinite manner. At its full extent, as it is intended to be understood here, it covered almost a thousand years—from the early scribes down to the completion of the Talmud in the sixth century c.e. It embraced the Persian, Greek, and Roman periods of Jewish history, with all the social, political, and religious movements associated with them. It saw the rise of the political state in the Hasmonean period and its final downfall in 135 c.e. During the whole of this long period the Jewish people was subjected to spiritual influences from the outside which deeply affected its whole outlook on life.

Again, from the beginning of the third century c.e. we have to deal with two separate communities—the Babylonian and the Palestinian. From that time the former began to play an increasingly important part in Jewish life until it became the spiritual centre for the whole of Jewry.

It is obvious that education, if it was to perform any useful social function, had to adapt itself continually to the changing conditions of life. And this adaptation, or development, would, first of all, be reflected in the curriculum, in the scope as well as the type of study which would be considered a desirable education.

The Jewish school retained its fundamentally religious character throughout the ages. For Jewish social and communal life, after the fall of the state, found its expression in religious activity, and the Synagogue became "the people's house." But religion itself was continually developing as a result of changing external and internal conditions. The education of a Jewish child in the Persian period was a very different thing, in its scope and its nature, from the religious instruction a follower of the Pharisees would give his son in Roman times. Almost as great a difference would be found between the time of Herod, for instance, and the fourth or fifth century in some Jewish community in Babylonia. Thus, for example, what Ben-Sira, strongly under the influence of Hellenistic philosophy, would regard as a good education for a youth, would be rejected by a man like Hillel. Nor could Ben-Sira have ever dreamt that a time would come when his own book would be included by authoritative opinion among forbidden literature. (*Sanhedrin*, 100b.)

One illustration will serve to show how this continuous development affected the elementary school.

One of the most important subjects, in the school of the later Talmudic period particularly, was the liturgy—prayers and benedictions. This must have claimed a large part of the time and energy of both teachers and pupils. It was all the more difficult because it was as yet in a fluid state and had, in addition, to be taught by heart. Teachers were expected to have an expert knowledge of the subject, and sometimes even well-known rabbis could not hold their own against them.

But this subject was hardly even in existence during the time of the early scribes in the Persian Age. And this would be true, although not always to the same extent, of many of the other subjects of study in the Jewish school.

2. There is another matter which requires to be cleared

up before we can undertake a profitable study of our subject.

A considerable portion of the material at our disposal consists of rabbinical sayings or reflections on education. Now these cannot always be taken as a record of existing conditions, or as regulations intended for immediate enforcement. Often they represent the aspirations of intellectual leaders, "pious wishes" which could scarcely be translated into practice. Sometimes indeed they are in the nature of aims and ideals. But here again their main value is in showing us what education still lacked, rather than what it had already achieved. For, as Dewey well reminds us, we do not usually emphasise things which do not require emphasis. We tend rather to frame our aims on the basis of the defects and the needs of the contemporary situation. A critical examination of these sayings in the light of the known conditions of the time is therefore an essential requirement for a proper appreciation of their value. But writers on the subject have not always paid sufficient attention to this requirement, and so we sometimes get a description of an ideal education system which has little relation to historic reality.

One or two examples will suffice to illustrate the foregoing.

Rabbi Akiba, the well-known spiritual leader of the early second century C.E., says: "When thou teachest thy son teach him in a well-corrected book." Now this is clearly in the nature of an advice, and all that can legitimately be inferred from it is that children in those times had to put up with all sorts of unreliable texts—which, in view of the scarcity and costliness of books, was inevitable. This, indeed, is confirmed by the Talmud itself, which finds it necessary to explain that the saying applies only to "a new lesson"—an eloquent testimony to the existing situation! Yet we find a writer stating on the

basis of this saying by Rabbi Akiba that according to the Talmud "textbooks must be without error." (Jew Encyc., "Pedagogics.")

The following is even more curious as an example of uncritical method. Rav, the famous founder of the Academy of Sura in the early third century c.e., is reported in the Talmud to have said to an elementary schoolmaster as follows: "When you beat a child, beat him only with a shoe-strap." This quite clearly represents the individual view of an educational reformer who endeavoured to introduce what he considered to be a desirable method of discipline. One would be justified to conclude from this that in practice teachers were in the habit of using on their pupils something much more formidable than a shoe-strap. Nor would there be any difficulty in proving such a conclusion from Talmudic evidence, which all goes to show that Rav's well-meant advice remained merely a pious aspiration. Nevertheless, one modern writer considers it a sufficient basis for his statement that "only in cases of persistent inattention might the teacher inflict punishment by means of a strap of reeds" (*ibid.*)

As a final illustration we may quote the following from a modern book on education in ancient Israel. ". . . The ordinance of Gamala"—the high priest who, according to a solitary tradition, was responsible for the introduction of elementary education in Palestine—"required the community to provide one teacher for twenty-five pupils or less; for any number over twenty-five and less than fifty, one teacher and one assistant; for fifty pupils, two teachers and two classes." (F. H. Swift, "Educat. in Ancient Israel," 95.)

Now for this statement, which credits Gamala with the introduction of such an elaborate and well-regulated system of organisation in Palestine of the first century c.e., there is absolutely no evidence from any source—except the report of an attempted reform of this nature by a scholar who

lived three hundred years later in Babylonia! The improvements which the latter endeavoured to introduce in the fourth century are treated as if they had already been put in force in the first century.

Examples of a similar kind could be greatly multiplied; and, as will be seen from the chapters dealing with the subject, the study of the curriculum suffered greatly from these uncritical methods.

To sum up: in dealing with any Talmudic text—and most of our material must be drawn from this source—it is necessary first of all to try and determine the period to which it belongs, frequently a matter of great difficulty. After that it must be examined in the light of the known conditions of that time. This method has been followed throughout in our study of the history of the early Jewish school.



## NOTES



## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

<sup>1</sup> P. Monroe, "A Text-book in the History of Education," New York, 1905.

<sup>2</sup> E. P. Cubberley, "The History of Education" and "Readings in the History of Education," Boston, 1920.

<sup>3</sup> William Boyd, "The History of Western Education," London, 1932.

### CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> The school is mentioned only once in the New Testament, Acts 19. 9, where the reference is to a Greek school.

<sup>2</sup> Baba Bathra 20b, 21a.

<sup>3</sup> Deuteronomy 6. 7, 11. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 13. 8, 14.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Exodus 10. 2; Joshua 4. 6, 22. 24; 1 Kings 9. 6; Jeremiah 32. 39; Psalms 78. 5, 6; and elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> See Bereshith Rabbah 84. 8; Berakhoth 4a; Sanhedrin 19 b.

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 12. 12, 18, 16. 11, 31. 12; 1 Samuel 1. 1; Jeremiah 9. 19.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremiah 7. 18.

<sup>9</sup> 2 Kings 17. 28; Ezekiel 22. 26; Haggai 2. 11 ff.; Zechariah 7. 3.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Jeremiah 18. 18; Ezekiel 7. 26, 22. 26, 28; Micah 3. 11; and many more.

<sup>11</sup> "צִוָּה" —Genesis 18. 19; Joshua 1. 7; "הוֹרָה" —Exodus 18. 16, 20; "הוֹרָה" —Exodus 24. 12; Leviticus 10. 11; Deuteronomy 17. 10, 11, 24. 8; 1 Samuel 12. 23; 1 Kings 8. 36; 2 Kings 17. 28; and many more. "הוֹרָה" should be understood in the sense of giving practical guidance in concrete cases; compare the Talmudic "מֹרֶה הָרוֹאֶה." Only in modern Hebrew has "מֹרֶה" become the common word for "teacher" instead of the former "מָכַר."

<sup>12</sup> "לִמְךָר" —more frequently in Deuteronomy (17 times) than in any other book of the Bible, except the Psalms (13 times in Psalm 119). Also fairly often in Jeremiah (14 times).

<sup>13</sup> R. T. Hereford, "The Pharisees," p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> Note in this connection Ezekiel 8. 1, 14. 1, 20. 1. We may see in these assemblies in the prophet's house an example of the meetings for instruction and prayer which gradually developed into the synagogue. But see Professor Zeitlin, *Proc. American Academy for Jewish Research*, 1931, p. 69, "The Origin of the Synagogue."

For the synagogue as a place of instruction, see Schuerer, "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," New Series, vol. 24, 53-55.

<sup>15</sup> Sopherim 18. 6; Abot derabbi Nathan 18; Hagigah, 3a.

<sup>16</sup> "מַבְנֵי" —Ezra, 8. 16; 1 Chronicles 25. 8; 2 Chronicles 35. 3. "מַשְׁכִּיל" —Daniel 11. 33, 12. 3; 2 Chronicles 30. 22. "מַלְמִיד" —(common word for "teacher") Psalms 94. 10, 119. 99. "חַלְמִיד" —(universally accepted word for "pupil") 1 Chronicles 25. 8.

<sup>17</sup> 2 Chronicles 17. 7 ff.; Nehemiah 8. 8.

<sup>18</sup> 76-67 B.C.E. But Ben-Sira already mentions the "Beth-midrash"—apparently a private "academy" for youth.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Maccabees 1. 14; 2 Maccabees 4. 9, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Shevuoth 5a.

## CHAPTER II

<sup>1</sup> "Legatio ad Caium," 16, 31; "Apion," 1. 12. See also "Ant.," IV.-VIII. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Cubberley, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>3</sup> Philo was, of course, not a Palestinian, but an Alexandrian Jew.

<sup>4</sup> The term "Torah" here, as frequently elsewhere in rabbinical literature, does not mean just "the law" as it is so often translated. It covers the whole body of laws and traditions of Judaism.

<sup>5</sup> The phrase in Deuteronomy 11. 19, "וְלִמְדָתָם אַתֶּם" was read: "וְלִמְדָתָם דָּתָךְ" instead of "תָּמָא." Such methods of interpretation are common in the Talmud.

<sup>6</sup> Isaiah 2. 3.

<sup>7</sup> Baba Bathra 21a.

<sup>8</sup> The Hebrew word for children used in both passages, "Tinoth," covers a wide age range, and is applied in Talmudic literature to little children as well as to young men—like the word "Naar" in the Bible. An interesting example will be found in Yoma 23a.

<sup>9</sup> Yehudah, who died 299 C.E., and his teacher Rav, d. 247 C.E.

<sup>10</sup> "Hazzan," a kind of beadle and reader combined in the synagogue of those days.

<sup>11</sup> "Historiyyah Yisreelith," vol. 3, 149; Jerusalem, 1923.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, Jewish Encyclop., article on "Pedagogics"; Hastings' Dictionary of the Bible, "Education"; Cheyene's Encyc. Bib., "Education"; F. H. Swift, "Education in Ancient Israel," p. 92; Monroe's Cyclop. of Education, article on "Jewish Education"; "A History of the Jewish People," Margolis and Marx, Philadelphia, 1921, p. 211.

<sup>13</sup> On Spartan education, see Boyd, *op. cit.*, 11-16; K. J. Free-man, "Schools of Hellas," chap. on Spartan education; Monroe, "Text-book," 70-79; "Source-book," passage from Plutarch.

<sup>14</sup> It is interesting that a scholar of the third century C.E. was rather shocked when he heard his son repeat those blessings and told him to change the last one to: "Who has not made me a slave."

<sup>15</sup> Berakhoth 47b.

<sup>16</sup> Pesahim 112a.

<sup>17</sup> Kiddushin 29a; Rabbi Eleazar, Bekhoroth 33b; Abaye, Kiddushin 48b; Judah, the Prince, Abodah Zarah 52b; Joshua ben Levi, Horayoth 8a; Hiyya ben Abba, Kiddushin 30a; see also the interesting passage in Aboth der. Nathan 8. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Kiddushin 31a; Aboth 4. 6; Sanhedrin 19b, 99b.

<sup>19</sup> Sanhedrin 17b; Sabbath 119b.

<sup>20</sup> Kethuboth 103b; Baba Mezi'a 85b.

<sup>21</sup> Aboth 4. 25; Aboth der. Nathan 23.

### CHAPTER III

<sup>1</sup> References are numerous. See, for instance, Genesis 31. 15, 34; Exodus 21. 7, 22. 15, 16; Deuteronomy 22. 29; Leviticus 19. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Leviticus 27. 1 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Compare also Genesis 19. 8.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 25. 41.

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 5. 21; Exodus 20. 17.

<sup>6</sup> Jeremiah 6. 12, 8. 10.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Deuteronomy 22. 13; Jeremiah 27. 6. This is the usual expression. Deuteronomy 24. 1, 3; Jeremiah 3. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 20. 12; Deuteronomy 5. 16; Leviticus 19. 3; on the latter see Kiddushin 30.

<sup>9</sup> The queen-mother is usually mentioned by name in the stories of the Kings of Judah.

<sup>10</sup> Deborah, Hannah, Bath-sheba, Hulda and numerous others.

<sup>11</sup> Exodus 15. 21; Judges 5.; 1 Samuel 2. 1 ff.

<sup>12</sup> Song of Songs 8. 6, 7.

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 24. 16 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Malachi 2. 14 ff.

<sup>15</sup> Isaiah 50. 1; Jeremiah 2. 2, 3. 1 ff. Note the symbolical interpretation of the Song of Songs in later ages.

<sup>16</sup> 2 Maccabees 7.; 4 Maccabees 8. 16.

<sup>17</sup> In the Christian Gospels women occupy a prominent position. This will be referred to later.

<sup>18</sup> Deuteronomy 12. 12; Jeremiah 9. 19, 7. 18; Proverbs 1. 8; see also Joel 3. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Ecclesiastes 7. 26, 28; but see Barton, "International Critical Commentary," whose interpretation can hardly be reconciled with verses 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> See "Hellenistic Greeks," Mahaffy and Goligher, London, 1928, p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> See "Short History of Women," John Langdon-Davies, London, 1928, pp. 150, 157.

<sup>22</sup> "Euripides and His Age," Gilbert Murray, p. 33; "The Greek Commonwealth," Alfred Zimmern, Oxford, 1924, p. 334; "The Greek Point of View," M. Hutton, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Ethics of the Fathers 1. 5; Berakhoth 24a.

<sup>24</sup> Baba Bathra 12a.

<sup>25</sup> Sukkah 38a; Menahoth 43b; G. H. Weiss, "Dor Dor Vedore-shav," vol. 2, 29.

<sup>26</sup> Sotah 20a.

<sup>27</sup> Kiddushin 29. 30; Sotah, *ibid.*; Yerushalmi, Sabbath, 6—1.

<sup>28</sup> Yoma 86b; Kethuboth 59b.

<sup>29</sup> Niddah 45b, 48b; Menahoth 110a.

<sup>30</sup> Sabbath 33b; Kiddushin, *ibid.*; Sotah, *ibid.*; Erubin 27a; see also Maimonides, "Yad," "Talmud Torah," 1. 1, 13; and Joseph., "Ant.," IV-VIII. 15.

<sup>31</sup> Sabbath 150a.

<sup>32</sup> Nazir 29a; Kiddushin, Sotah, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Berakhoth 17a.

<sup>34</sup> Sotah 22a; Abodah Zarah 38b.

<sup>35</sup> Yevamoth 100b, 107-109; Niddah 45a; and elsewhere.

<sup>36</sup> Niddah 31b; Baba Bathra 16b.

<sup>37</sup> For girls' education in Athens, see Freeman, "Schools of Hellas," 46-48; Monroe, "Source Book," 36-39.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Timothy 2. 12; 1 Corinthians 14. 34, 35.

<sup>39</sup> See "Woman: Her Position and Influence in Ancient Greece and Rome, and among the Early Christians," James Donaldson, London, 1907, p. 182; "The Literary History of Early Christianity," Ch. T. Cruttwell, London, 1893, pp. 586-87.

<sup>40</sup> Among rabbinical sayings with a strong suggestion of the cynical and contemptuous attitude to the woman the following may be mentioned: Bereshith Rabbah 17, 18, 45; Kiddushin 49b; Nedarim 20b; Sopherim 15. Numerous passages, scattered throughout rabbinical literature, show us the other side of the picture—a humane, sympathetic and even respectful view of the woman as wife. The following may be noted: Yevamoth 62b; Gittin 90a; Sanhedrin 22a, where we are told that "a man whose first wife has died it is as if the Holy Temple were destroyed in his time"; and again: "For every loss there is a compensation except for the death of a wife of one's youthful days."

## CHAPTER IV

<sup>1</sup> See note 13 in Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> For a description of the Hellenistic cities in Palestine see A. Cherikover, "The Jews and the Greeks in the Hellenistic Period" (Hebrew, Tel-Aviv, 1930), pp. 129-161.

<sup>3</sup> How large the Jewish population of some of these towns was may be inferred from Josephus, "Wars," 2. 18.

<sup>4</sup> Klausner, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, chap. ii. See also Pesikta 101, where even the Greek word for school—"Ascola"—is found. This, however, as far as the writer is aware, is never applied in Talmudic literature to the Jewish school.

<sup>5</sup> Aboda Zara 15b.

<sup>6</sup> William Boyd, *op. cit.*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>7</sup> Nehemiah 8. 8. The question of the origin of the "disputational" method will be referred to later.

<sup>8</sup> Thus, for instance, Gudemann, article "Education" in Jew. Encyc.; F. H. Swift, "Education in Ancient Israel"; Klausner, *op. cit.*; the writer on Jew. Educ. in Cyclop. and Diction. of Educat.; and many others.

<sup>9</sup> Baba Bathra 21a.

<sup>10</sup> Kiddushin 82a.

<sup>11</sup> Baba Bathra 21.

<sup>12</sup> Taanith 24a.

<sup>13</sup> Baba Bathra, *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Nedarim 37a; Bekhoroth 29a.

<sup>15</sup> Compare the attack of Socrates on teachers who attract pupils by low fees and big promises.

<sup>16</sup> This was also the practice in Rome according to the law instituted by Constantine.

<sup>17</sup> "Talmud Torah" I. 9; commentary on the Mishnah, Nedarim 35a; and on Aboth 4. 7.

<sup>18</sup> From Bekhoroth 29a and Aboth der. Nathan 17, it would seem, however, that it was not entirely uncommon to charge fees for the teaching of the "Oral Law."

<sup>19</sup> Or for teaching the intonation, Nedarim 37a.

<sup>20</sup> Bezah 16a.

<sup>21</sup> Baba Bathra, *ibid.*; see also Makkoth 16b about the teacher who was removed for harshness towards his pupils; this incident is repeated three times in the Talmud.

<sup>22</sup> K. J. Freeman, *op. cit.*, 58, 88-89.

<sup>23</sup> For a description of the organisation of the Jewish elementary school in more modern times, see the essay by A. M. Lipshitz,

## CHAPTER V

<sup>1</sup> Sh. Zuri, "Hamishpat Haziburi," Paris, 1931, 244.

<sup>2</sup> The Mishnah was compiled by Judah the Prince, 200 C.E.

<sup>3</sup> Berakhoth 17a. Rav died 247 C.E.

<sup>4</sup> Baba Bathra 21a. Raba died 352 C.E.

<sup>5</sup> Megillah 28b. Rav Ashi died 427 C.E.

<sup>6</sup> Gittin 66a.

<sup>7</sup> "בֵּית הַסְּפָר," the "House of the Book"—that is, the Bible. But it may also mean "the house where children are instructed in letters," or literacy. This meaning of "סְפָר," already found in Daniel and in an early Talmudic text, shows traces of Greek influence. This point will be referred to later.

<sup>8</sup> Baba Kama 114b; "Rabbi" refers to Judah the Prince, compiler of the Mishnah, d. 220 C.E. "Priests' portion" = "Terumah."

<sup>9</sup> Semahoth 2. 4. Rabbi Tarphon was a contemporary of Rabbi Akiba, early second century C.E.

<sup>10</sup> Sukkah 29a. Rabbi Meir was a disciple of Rabbi Akiba.

<sup>11</sup> Baba Bathra, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> J. P. Mahaffy, "Old Greek Education," 49.

<sup>13</sup> Ezekiel 11. 16; Sabbath 32a; Megillah 29a.

<sup>14</sup> Pesahim 101a; see Zuri, *op. cit.*, 241 *ff.*

<sup>15</sup> Megillah 21a. Rabban Gamaliel—end of first, beginning of second century C.E.

<sup>16</sup> Sanhedrin 37a.

<sup>17</sup> Aboth der. Nathan 6.

<sup>18</sup> Megillah, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Kethuboth 111a.

<sup>20</sup> Canticles Rabbah 6. 17.

<sup>21</sup> Megillah, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Aboth der. Nathan 8.

<sup>23</sup> Sotah 17b; Mikvaoth 1. 10; and many other places.

<sup>24</sup> Gittin 58a.

<sup>25</sup> See chapter on Discipline.

<sup>26</sup> Mahaffy, *ibid.*; Freeman, *op. cit.*, 83-4; on the manner of sitting see also Acts 22. 3, which compare with Aboth 1. 4.

<sup>27</sup> Monroe, "Source Book," 32; Mahaffy, *op. cit.*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> That is, the first and the last, the second and the second last letters, etc. This method of teaching was also used in the Hellenistic school.

<sup>29</sup> Aboth der. Nathan 6; for an earlier version of this story see Kethuboth 62b.

<sup>30</sup> Semahoth 6. For the value of the various coins see article "Money" in Jewish Encyc., or other similar work of reference.

A useful article will be found in the "Ozar Yisrael," article "Matbeoth."

<sup>31</sup> Baba Kama 115a—from the fourth century; Gittin 35a. On books in later times see S. Asaph in the "Reshumoth" I.

<sup>32</sup> Baba Mezi'a 29b.

<sup>33</sup> Kethuboth 50a. A good illustration of the scarcity of books and its effects on education will be found above, Chap. II, Sec. III, in the story of the argument between the two rabbis.

<sup>34</sup> Sopherim 3. 13.

<sup>35</sup> Sanhedrin 100a.

<sup>36</sup> According to N. Sokolow in the "Kethubim," London, the latter were collections of homiletic material.

<sup>37</sup> Gittin 60; Yadayim 3. 5; and elsewhere.

## CHAPTER VI

<sup>1</sup> Sukkah 42a; Nedarim 32a.

<sup>2</sup> Kethuboth 50a.

<sup>3</sup> Aboth 5. 24.

<sup>4</sup> See essay by A. M. Lipshitz, quoted above.

<sup>5</sup> Bereshith Rabbah 63.

<sup>6</sup> At the present time it is still the custom for the father to say this blessing when his son reaches the age of thirteen.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, *op. cit.*, 49; Mahaffy, 17; and his article in Monroe's Cyclop. of Educ.; Monroe's "Source Book," 32.

<sup>8</sup> See Baba Kama 114b, quoted above; Taanith 23b.

<sup>9</sup> Pesahim 8b.

<sup>10</sup> Kiddushin 30a.

<sup>11</sup> Famous codifier and philosopher of the twelfth century.

<sup>12</sup> Baba Bathra 121b; Haggahah 12. It is not, however, certain that it applied to the elementary school.

<sup>13</sup> Jewish Encyc., article on "Pedagogics."

<sup>14</sup> Baba Bathra 8b.

<sup>15</sup> Freeman, *op. cit.*, 69; Cubberley, *op. cit.*, 24.

<sup>16</sup> Haggahah 15b.

<sup>17</sup> Baba Bathra 8b; Erubin 54a; Berakhoth 63b; Aboth 2. 6; Taanith 8a.

<sup>18</sup> Aboth 4. 26; Kiddushin 82a.

<sup>19</sup> Mahaffy, *ibid.*, 47.

<sup>20</sup> Baba Bathra 21a and b; "Ozar Midrashim," Eizenstein, 513.

<sup>21</sup> Kethuboth 62a; a combination of several offices by the teacher is quite common at the present time, especially in Western European and American Jewish communities.

<sup>22</sup> Freeman, *op. cit.*, 81; Mahaffy, *ibid.*; Monroe's Cyclop. of Education, article "Roman Education."

<sup>23</sup> Martial, Epigrams, 9. 68.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, article on "Pedagogics" Jew. Encyc.; or article on Jew. Educ. in Monroe's Cyclop.

<sup>25</sup> Horayoth 13a.

<sup>26</sup> Baba Bathra 8b.

<sup>27</sup> Compare Martial's Epigram, quoted above.

<sup>28</sup> Pesahim 49b; Sanhedrin 17b; but here the arrangement seems to be casual; "Ozar Midrashim," *ibid.*

## CHAPTER VII

<sup>1</sup> Levit. Rabb. 19; Aboth der. Nathan 14.

<sup>2</sup> Gittin 80a; Abod. Zar. 10a.

<sup>3</sup> Abod. Zar. 15b.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel 1. 4; Sabbath 12a. "Beth-hasepher," the Hebrew word for "school," may be translated the "house of letters," or "literacy."

<sup>5</sup> Sanhed. 39b.

<sup>6</sup> On the character of the Talmudic proposition see Professor Guttman, "Devir," 1-3, and Sh. Zuri, "Hamishpat Haziburi." Neither of them, however, mentions the possibility of a Hellenistic origin for the Talmudic method of disputation, nor even the likelihood that it owed something to Hellenistic influence.

<sup>7</sup> Sotah 49.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance, Genesis Rabb. 63; Ber. 3b; and elsewhere.

<sup>9</sup> Menahoth 99b.

## CHAPTER VIII

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Schuerer, "A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ," New Series, 24, p. 50; articles in Cheyne and Hastings; Swift, *ibid.*, p. 96, and others.

<sup>2</sup> Lamentations Rabbah 1. 5; for a description of the Roman manner of finger-reckoning, see Cubberley, *op. cit.*, 65.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Judges 8. 14; Isaiah 10. 19, 29. 11, 12, 18; Jeremiah 36.; Nehemiah 6. 17; 1 Chronicles 2. 55; 2 Chronicles 21. 12.

<sup>4</sup> Kethuboth 28a; Shevuoth 45a; Aboth 3. 20; Ohaloth 11. 5; Mikvaoth 10. 10.

<sup>5</sup> References: Sanhedrin 95b; B. Bathra 21, 136a, 168b; Temurah 14. 1; Hulin 9a; Erubin 13a; Gittin 24b; Canticles Rabb. 13.

## CHAPTER IX

<sup>1</sup> See article "Aggada" in Hebrew Encyc., "Eshkol."

<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive discussion of the synagogue readings see the essay by Professor A. Büchler in the *J.Q.R.*, vols. v., vi., 1893-4.

<sup>3</sup> Sabbath 11a, 13; Sh. Zuri, *ibid.*, 247-255.

<sup>4</sup> This suggests itself from Megillah 24a.

<sup>5</sup> Megillah 20a; see, however, Schuerer, *ibid.*, 79.

<sup>6</sup> Compare the oft-quoted text in Aboth: "At five, for Scripture; at ten, for Mishnah; at thirteen, for observance of commandments." The leaving age is discussed elsewhere.

<sup>7</sup> Megillah 24a; Berakhoth 53b; Gittin 58a; Taanith 9. 1; Sanhedrin 111b.

<sup>8</sup> Kiddushin 30a.

<sup>9</sup> Menahoth 29a; Berakhoth 62b; Sanhedrin 33b; and often.

<sup>10</sup> Levit. Rabb. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Comp. A. M. Lipshitz, "Hatekufah" 7.

<sup>12</sup> Pesahim 6a; A. Büchler, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Sotah 30b.

<sup>14</sup> Pesahim 109a, 114b, 116a.

<sup>15</sup> Berakhoth 20.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Sukkah 38a.

<sup>17</sup> Berakhoth 46b.

<sup>18</sup> Berakhoth 50a.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 48a.

<sup>20</sup> Erubin 28b.

<sup>21</sup> Nazir 29b.

<sup>22</sup> Haggah 10a; Baba Mezi'a 33; Baba Kama 54.

<sup>23</sup> Ab. Zarah 4a.

<sup>24</sup> Baba Mezi'a 85b; Ab. Zarah 56b.

<sup>25</sup> Koheleth Rabb. 7.

<sup>26</sup> Kiddushin 29a; Freeman, *op. cit.*, 152.

## CHAPTER X

<sup>1</sup> This chapter has been published in Hebrew, "Haolam," London, 1933, in the author's translation.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Hillel's saying, "An ignorant person cannot be pious," with Herbart's, "The ignorant man cannot be virtuous." Dr. Rusk, in "The Doctrines of Great Educators," p. 215, renders this saying thus: "The callous or apathetic man—that is, the man with blunted sensibility—cannot be virtuous."

<sup>3</sup> "Outline of Educational Doctrine," Lange, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Aboth 1. 17, 3. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ab. Zarah. 17b.

<sup>6</sup> Berakhoth 17a. For his educational reforms see Baba Bathra 21a.

<sup>7</sup> "Science of Education," Felkin's translation, 220, 84.

<sup>8</sup> Kiddushin 20b; B. Bathra 16a; Ab. der. Nathan 16. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Cantic. Rabb. on 1. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Felkin, *ibid.*, 213-14.

<sup>11</sup> John Dewey, "Democracy and Education," 11.

<sup>12</sup> R. Eliezer. Aboth 2. 8; Sukkah 28a.

<sup>13</sup> See Boyd's "History of Western Education," 369.

<sup>14</sup> Leviticus 26. 44; Aboth 6. 2, 5, 6; Megillah 3b; Berakhoth 8a; Sanhedrin 59a; Sabbath 119b.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Boyd's "History of West. Education," 360.

<sup>16</sup> Berakhoth 10; Niddah 30b; and elsewhere.

<sup>17</sup> Sanhedrin 91b.

<sup>18</sup> "Emile," translated by Barbara Foxley, p. 56.

<sup>19</sup> Based on Genesis 8. 12. "Yezer"—instinct, or native disposition.

<sup>20</sup> Ab. der. Nathan 16. 2.

<sup>21</sup> Aboth 5. 21; see also Nazir 29b and explanation of Rashi there.

<sup>22</sup> Stanley Hall, "Adolescence," vol. 2, chap. xiii., where there is also a section on Jewish confirmation.

<sup>23</sup> Hall, *ibid.*, Preface; vol. 2, pp. 70, 303, 452 and elsewhere. Comp. W. James' "Varieties of Religious Experience," 199.

<sup>24</sup> J. W. Slaughter, "The Adolescent," 42.

<sup>25</sup> Olive A. Wheeler, "Youth," 165 ff.

<sup>26</sup> "Social Psychology," 439.

<sup>27</sup> Felkin, *ibid.*, 72, 179.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Boyd's "Hist. of West Educ.," 291.

<sup>29</sup> Berakhoth 48a. The prophecy was handsomely fulfilled.

<sup>30</sup> Sukkah 42a; Arakhin 2b, 3a.

<sup>31</sup> On the Three Pilgrim Festivals—Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles; Hagigah 2a.

<sup>32</sup> Sukkah 28a.

## CHAPTER XI

<sup>1</sup> McLellan and Dewey, "Applied Psycho.," 95.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 5. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Leviticus 11. 29 ff., 41 ff.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, Klausner, "Harayon Hameshihi," Jerusalem, 1927, 12.

<sup>5</sup> This subject is dealt with at some length in Chapter X and also in connection with the curriculum.

<sup>6</sup> "Instit. Orat.," Book II, chap. ii. See also J. I. Baer, "Greek Theories on Elementary Cognition," 316.

<sup>7</sup> Erubin 54b; Taanith 8a; Yerushalmi Horayoth 3.

<sup>8</sup> Strack, H. L., "Introduction to the Talmud," 25.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> On Aristotle's laws of association see Sir W. Hamilton, "Lectures on Metaphysics," vol. 2, Lectures 30-31; also J. I. Baer, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> A discussion of this long-standing controversy will be found in Strack, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Aboth 2. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Taanith 7a; Kethuboth 111b; Aboth 1. 16; Berakhoth 27b.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter X, end of Section I.

<sup>15</sup> This subject is dealt with at some length in Chapter V, Section III.

<sup>16</sup> Menahoth 29b. "The correct books of the house of the teacher." Another rendering is, however, possible.

<sup>17</sup> H. Wheeler Robinson, "Hebrew Psychology," in "The People and the Book," 354.

<sup>18</sup> On this subject see Baer, *op. cit.*

<sup>19</sup> Deuteronomy 4. 9; Isaiah 46. 8, 57. 11; Jeremiah 3. 16, 44. 21; Psalms 31. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Exodus 17. 14; Deuteronomy 25. 19; Jeremiah 17. 1, 31. 32; Psalms 109. 14; Proverbs 3. 3, 6. 21, 7. 3.

<sup>21</sup> Erubin 54b; for Plato's views see Baer, *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> "Instit. Orat.," *ibid.* Erubin 65; Nedarim 41a; story of Judah I; and elsewhere. In the Talmud generally the heart, but sometimes the brain, is considered the seat of intelligence; as to memory, the heart seemed to be regarded as its seat until post-Talmudic times. See "Khozari" 3-11. This was apparently also the view of Ibn-Ezra and others.

<sup>23</sup> Horayoth 13b.

<sup>24</sup> Sir W. Hamilton, *ibid.*; "Instit. Orat.," *ibid.* See also Ralston and Gage, "Present-day Psychology," 178 ff.

<sup>25</sup> Aboth 3. 10.

## CHAPTER XII

<sup>1</sup> Abodah Zarah 19a; Sabbath 63a.

<sup>2</sup> Sabbath, *ibid.*; Sanhedrin 36b.

<sup>3</sup> Erubin 54b; Yerushalmi, Berakhoth 5. 1. See also Yevamoth 72b.

<sup>4</sup> Taanith 9a; Kethuboth 103b; Bab. Mezi'a 85b—referred to elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> Bab. Bathra 21b.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Freeman's "Schools of Hellas," 93; Cubberley, "Readings," 5.

<sup>7</sup> Freeman, *op. cit.*, 94-5.

<sup>8</sup> Herbart's "Minor Works" (Eckoff), pp. 34-6.

<sup>9</sup> Sir T. P. Nunn, "Education: Data and First Principles," 62-3.

<sup>10</sup> Dewey, "School and Society," 51. On the question of making pupils learn verbatim proverbs, short poems, etc., see Bolton, "Everyday Psychology for Teachers," p. 210. Watson's "Behaviourism," p. 41, contains an interesting passage bearing on this matter. Compare also Erubin 54b, the simile of the fig tree.

<sup>11</sup> Sanhedrin 99a.

<sup>12</sup> Erubin 54b; Taanith 8a.

<sup>13</sup> Pesahim 72a; Taanith 8a.

<sup>14</sup> For Quintilian see "Instit. Orator," Book I, chap. i.; Book II, chap. ii.; for Plato and Aristotle, Baer, p. 311; Gomperz, "Greek Thinkers," vol. 4, p. 183. Modern views on the subject will be found in, among others, Sturt and Oakden, "Modern Psychology and Education," p. 178; Breitwieser, "Psychological Education," pp. 143-4; Pear, "Remembering and Forgetting," p. 10; Burton, "Nature and Direction of Learning," pp. 146-150.

### CHAPTER XIII

<sup>1</sup> Hulin 63b; Menahoth 43b.

<sup>2</sup> G. H. Thomson, "Instinct and Intelligence," pp. 250-1; Ralston and Gage, *ibid.*; but compare Collins and Drever, "Experimental Psychology," p. 232; and Charles Fox, "Educational Psychology," London, 1935, pp. 181-2.

<sup>3</sup> Erubin 54b; Abod. Zar. 19a; Leviticus Rab. 19; Deuter. Rab. 8; Quintilian, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> "Dor dor Vedoreshav," vol. 2, p. 208.

<sup>5</sup> Kiddushin 30a.

<sup>6</sup> This subject is referred to in connection with the curriculum.

<sup>7</sup> See article "Mnemonics," Jew. Encyc.

<sup>8</sup> See chap. on the teaching of reading.

<sup>9</sup> "The Montessori Method," translated by Anne E. George, p. 307. There is a considerable literature on "silent reading"; a systematic exposition will be found in Klapper's "Teaching Children to Read."

<sup>10</sup> Erubin 54b. According to the Talmud the number of limbs in the human body is 248. The custom of shaking to and fro during study is based in the "Mahzor Vitri" on Exodus 20. 18; see S. Asaph, "Meqoroth," vol. 1, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Maimonides, the "Code," "Talm. Tor.," 3. 12.

<sup>12</sup> Genesis Rab. 65. See chap. on Discipline.

<sup>13</sup> W. H. D. Rouse in "The New Teaching," edit. by John Adams, p. 148.

<sup>14</sup> Psalms 113-118.

<sup>15</sup> Berakhoth 62a, and comment of Rashi there.

<sup>16</sup> See W. Wickes, "A Treatise on the Accentuation," 1887, p. 8.

<sup>17</sup> Wickes, *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> On subject of this chap., see also Sir John Stainer, "The Music of the Bible."

<sup>19</sup> Rosh Hashanah 33a.

<sup>20</sup> "Protagoras," Monroe's "Source Book," pp. 31-2.

<sup>21</sup> Freeman, "Schools of Hellas," 107-114; Cubberley, "History," p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> C. Brereton, "Modern Language Teaching," 44-47.

<sup>23</sup> Ab. Zarah 19a.

<sup>24</sup> Sabbath 58b.

<sup>25</sup> Sanhedrin, 105b.

<sup>26</sup> Commentary on the Mishnah, introduction to chap. 10, Sanhedrin.

## CHAPTER XIV

(*This chapter has been published in Hebrew in the "Hachinuch," New York, 1935, in the author's translation.*)

<sup>1</sup> Monroe, "Hist. of Educat.," pp. 95-6. See also Freeman, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-92.

<sup>2</sup> B. Bathra 21a.

<sup>3</sup> See Jeremiah 25. 26, where "שְׁנַחַת" apparently stands for "בְּבָבָל." Also 51. 1, where "לְבָבִי" might stand for "בְּשָׁרִים."

<sup>4</sup> "Schools of Hellas," *ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Sabbath 104a.

<sup>6</sup> Or "The Torah." It should be noted, however, that the Hebrew word usually means "to teach." The word is not used in the form which would give the meaning "to learn."

<sup>7</sup> The two middle letters of the Tetragrammaton.

<sup>8</sup> *I.e.*, If you are charitable in the manner described above.

<sup>9</sup> A reference to the mystical interpretations of the Torah.

<sup>10</sup> Another version refers to the mnemonic signs used in study.

<sup>11</sup> See Rashi. The question should be: "Why is the back of the 'Res' turned towards the 'Qof'?" The change was made out of a sense of reverence.

<sup>12</sup> Leaving an opening between it and the upper horizontal line of the letter.

<sup>13</sup> The word denoting "falsehood" is composed of three letters

standing close to one another in the alphabet; of the three letters which make up the word "truth," the first is found at the beginning of the alphabet; the second, if finals are counted, exactly in the middle; the third at the end.

<sup>14</sup> The middle letter of the word "falsehood" is a sublinear letter; the word, therefore, appears to stand on one leg; each of the three letters composing the word "truth" has more than one "leg."

<sup>15</sup> For instance, "Gimel, Daleth" = "gemol dallim"; "Peh" = "Peh"; and particularly the first—"Aleph"—"aleph."

<sup>16</sup> See, for instance, the article "Pedagogics," Jew. Encyclop.

<sup>17</sup> In modern times illustrations of an entirely different nature were used for the purpose of impressing upon the children's minds the shapes of the letters. For a delightful description of these, see Bialik's story, "Saphiah."

<sup>18</sup> Dionys. Halic., quoted in Wilkins' "National Educat. in Greece," pp. 72-3.

<sup>19</sup> J. Welton, "Principles of Teaching," p. 115.

<sup>20</sup> The literature on the teaching of reading is very extensive. For a systematic exposition of the subject the reader is referred to E. B. Huey's "Psychology and Pedagogy of Reading," which also contains a chapter on the history of reading methods; and to P. Klapper's "Teaching Children to Read." A useful chapter on reading will also be found in Rusk's "Experimental Education."

<sup>21</sup> Hastings' Dict. of the Bible, article "Education." Ernest Renan had at least a glimpse of the difficulty of the problem. See "Life of Jesus," Everyman's, p. 47.

<sup>22</sup> "Makre," "Mashnee."

<sup>23</sup> Sukkah 42a.

<sup>24</sup> There are numerous passages in the Talmud dealing with the writing of scrolls. A good idea of the restrictions with which this was surrounded may be obtained from the tractate "Sopherim."

<sup>25</sup> Taanith 27b. The whole passage is important for this subject. The period was the early part of the third century C.E.

<sup>26</sup> דָבָר, רָבָר, כָּבָר, רָבָר, דָבָר, דָבָר, דָבָר, (דָבָר)

<sup>27</sup> See, for instance, "Aboth derabbi Nathan," chapters 6 and 15, the stories about Hillel and R. Akibah.

<sup>28</sup> Sabbath 147b.

<sup>29</sup> See Klapper, *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Erubin 53b; Megillah 24b.

<sup>31</sup> סָבָב, תָּמָם, בָּו, אָעָשָׂה.

<sup>32</sup> A fuller discussion of the subject will be found in the writer's "New Hebrew Primer," "Hayeled," Soncino Press, London, 1933; 3rd edition, "Omanuth," Tel-Aviv, 1936.

<sup>33</sup> S. Pinsker: "Introduction to the Babylonian System of Punc-

tuation," Hebrew, 1863, p. 6, and elsewhere. Weiss, "Dor dor Vedoreshav," vol. 4, pp. 248-9.

<sup>34</sup> "Canticles Rabbah" 2. 4.

## CHAPTER XV

<sup>1</sup> For bibliography on the subject see various Encyclopædias and Dictionaries, especially Jewish Encycl., article "Targum" and "Ozar Israel," article of the same title.

<sup>2</sup> Megillah 24a.

<sup>3</sup> See on this subject Chapter X.

<sup>4</sup> See, for instance, 1 Chronicles 25. 8; and elsewhere.

<sup>5</sup> The last phrase may also be translated "and they (the people) understood the reading" instead of "and they caused to understand." But both in the verse immediately before and in the verse immediately after, the verb is used in the sense of "causing to understand," "teaching," or "explaining," and is applied to the Levites.

<sup>6</sup> Kiddushin 49a.

<sup>7</sup> Megillah 24a.

<sup>8</sup> See Chapter XII, Section II.

<sup>9</sup> "Instit. Orator.," Book I, chap. 5.

<sup>10</sup> Berakhoth 8a.

<sup>11</sup> For a full discussion of the subject of Direct Method and translation, with particular reference to the teaching of Hebrew, see the writer's Hebrew essay, "Haolam," London, November, 1933; also his article in the *Jewish Review*, 7, 1934; see also introductions to the writer's textbooks, "Hayeled" and "Hanaar," Tel-Aviv, 1935.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in "Modernism in Language Teaching," H. E. Moore, p. 13.

The literature on language teaching is very extensive. Harold Palmer's books may be mentioned particularly.

## CHAPTER XVI

<sup>1</sup> Comenius, "The Great Didactic," translated by M. W. Keatinge, pp. 249-52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Kallah Rab., chap. 2.

<sup>4</sup> "Ethics of the Fathers," 6. 4.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. 4.

<sup>6</sup> "The Mimes and Fragments of Herondas," Walter Headlam, p. 113.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, the article on "Law and Justice" in the *Encyc. Biblica*, Cheyne and Black.

<sup>8</sup> Exodus 21. 23 *ff.*; Leviticus 24. 19, 20; Deuteronomy 19. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 13. 6, 12; 17. 7, 12, 13; 19. 13, 19, 20; 21. 21; 24. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Deuteronomy 8. 16.

<sup>11</sup> "The Mimes and Fragments of Herondas," p. 115.

<sup>12</sup> *Makkoth* 22b.

<sup>13</sup> *B. Bathra* 21a.

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, article on "Pedagogics" in *Jew. Encyc.*

<sup>15</sup> *Makkoth*, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Sukkah* 29a.

<sup>17</sup> *Semahot* 8.

<sup>18</sup> "Sources for the History of Education from the Middle Ages to Modern Times," S. Asaph (Hebrew), p. 270.

<sup>19</sup> Martial, "Epigrams," Book IX, 68, quoted in Cubberley's "Readings in the History of Education," p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> *B. Bathra*, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> *Arakhin* 16b.

<sup>22</sup> *Menahoth* 7a.

<sup>23</sup> William Boyd, "Hist. of West. Educat.," pp. 79-80.

<sup>24</sup> *Kethuboth* 96a.

<sup>25</sup> *Hulin* 107b.

<sup>26</sup> *Makkoth* 16b; *Gittin* 36; *Bekhoroth* 46a. This explanation of the "transgression" is found only in the last-mentioned place; in the two other places the same commentator, Rashi, merely says that he beat the children too severely.

<sup>27</sup> *Numbers Rabbah*, chap. 12.

<sup>28</sup> *Taanith* 24a. This passage is given also by L. Gr. in his article on "Pedagogics" in the *Jew. Encycl.*, but it is difficult to see what basis there is for his rendering.

## CHAPTER XVII

<sup>1</sup> "History of Hebrew Civilisation," 194.

<sup>2</sup> *Pesahim* 118a.

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 49. 24; Isaiah 40. 11; Jeremiah 31. 9; Psalms 23. 1, 80. 2; and many others.

<sup>4</sup> Exodus 31. 1-6; see also 1 Kings 7. 14; Jeremiah 10. 9; 1 Chronicles 22. 15; 2 Chronicles 2. 12.

<sup>5</sup> See, for instance, Proverbs 10. 5, 26; 12. 11, 24; 13. 4; 15. 19; and often; Psalm 128. 2.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Hosea 12. 8.

<sup>7</sup> Compare Micah 6. 8.

<sup>8</sup> See G. Glotz, "Ancient Greece at Work," 321; also Cuberley, "History of Education," 20.

<sup>9</sup> Monroe, "Source Book of the History of Education, Greek and Roman Period," 21.

<sup>10</sup> Freeman, "Schools of Hellas," 43.

<sup>11</sup> Glotz, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> See, on this subject, Dewey, "Democracy and Education," 294 *ff.*

<sup>13</sup> Charles' edition, 38. 24-39. 31. F. H. Swift, in "Education in Ancient Israel," 82, sees in this passage "the most complete description of the ideal scribe that has descended to us from that period."

<sup>14</sup> See Cheyne and Black, *Encyclopædia Biblica*, article "Education." For a general discussion of Hellenistic influence on Ben-Sira see Introduction to Ben-Sira in Charles' edition of the Apocrypha; article "Sirach" in *Jew. Encyc.*; "Books of the Apocrypha," by W. O. E. Oesterley. One of the latest writers on Ben-Sira, Dr. Cherikover, in his Hebrew book, "Hayehudim vəhayevanim," has nothing to say on the subject. It is instructive to compare the reactions of Jeremiah (18) and Ben-Sira respectively to the potter and his craft.

<sup>15</sup> Aristotle, "Politics," Book VIII, chap. 2, Ellis' translation.

<sup>16</sup> See on this subject Franz Delitzsch, "Jewish Artisan Life in the Time of Jesus," 1902.

## CHAPTER XVIII

<sup>1</sup> Kiddushin 29a. Compare Ephesians 4. 28: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have to give to him that hath need."

<sup>2</sup> Baba Mezi'a 83a.

<sup>3</sup> Baba Kama 116b; Hulin 54b.

<sup>4</sup> Ber. 17a.

<sup>5</sup> Ab. der. Nathan 11; Nedarim 49b; Baba Bathra 110a; Sanhedrin 29a; Aboth 2. 2; Ber. 8a.

<sup>6</sup> Fr. Paulsen, "German Education Past and Present," 183, 240.

<sup>7</sup> Traces of Hellenistic influence may be found in this chapter too. Compare "No one is really a free man unless he is engaged in the study of the Torah"—which is reminiscent of the Greek ideal of contemplative knowledge.

<sup>8</sup> Ber. 356.

<sup>9</sup> Kiddushin 82. The whole page is important for the subject under discussion.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 70a.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 82; and in other places.

<sup>12</sup> Gratz 3. 33; Sukkah 51b; Megillah 26a; Nazir 52a; Yoma 38a.

<sup>13</sup> Pesahim 108a; Gittin 58a; Makkoth 8b; Abodah Zarah 15b.

<sup>14</sup> Kiddushin 29a.

<sup>15</sup> Exodus 11. 5; Joshua 9. 21, 23, 27; Judges 16. 21; Lamentations 5. 13. On the hawker amongst the Greeks see Glotz, *op. cit.*, 165.

<sup>16</sup> Yevamoth 63a.

<sup>17</sup> Kiddusin 82b. A whole list of despised occupations will be found there.

<sup>18</sup> Hagigah 7b; Kiddushin, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> Sanhedrin 58b; Yevamoth, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Ber. 43b.

## CHAPTER XIX

<sup>1</sup> Isaiah 49. 15; Sanhedrin 105a.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremiah 31. 19; Hosea 11. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Psalms 103. 13.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Samuel 12. 16; 19. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 21. 16; 2 Kings 4. 20.

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 4. 1, 30. 2; comp. Malachi 2. 15.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 48. 9; Isaiah 8. 18; Psalms 127. 3; Job. 1. 21.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Samuel 4. 21; Isaiah 7. 14, 8. 3 (62. 4); Hosea 1. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Jeremiah 6. 26, 20. 15; Amos 8. 10; Zechariah, 12. 10.

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 19. 30 ff., 30. 1; Numbers 27. 4; 1 Samuel 1. 11, 12.

<sup>11</sup> G. H. Payne, "The Child in Human Progress," 194, 198.

<sup>12</sup> Psalms 127. 4, 128. 3, 144. 12.

<sup>13</sup> Job 42. 13 ff.; Zechariah 8. 5.

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 21.; Exodus 2.; Ezekiel 16. 4 ff.; Psalms 27. 10. See also Fraser, "Folklore in the Old Testament," vol. 3, pp. 437-64.

<sup>15</sup> Jeremiah 14. 5; Lamentations 2. 11, 12, 19, 20; 4. 2 ff.

<sup>16</sup> Genesis 22.; Judges 11. 34 ff.

<sup>17</sup> Deuteronomy 12. 31; 1 Kings 16. 34; 2 Kings 3. 27, 17. 31; Ezekiel 20. 26; Micah 6. 7.

<sup>18</sup> Isaiah 57. 5; Jeremiah 19. 7. 31; Ezekiel 16. 20, 21; 20. 26-31; 23. 37.

<sup>19</sup> 2 Kings 16. 3, 21. 6; 2 Chronicles 28. 3, 33. 6.

<sup>20</sup> W. B. Stevenson, "Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel," Guild textbooks, 1920, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> Leviticus 26. 29; Deuteronomy 28. 53; 2 Kings 6. 26 ff.; Ezekiel 5. 10; Lamentations 2. 20, 4. 10.

<sup>22</sup> 2 Kings, *ibid.*; Josephus, "Wars," 6. 3.

<sup>23</sup> 2 Kings 8. 12; Isaiah 13. 16; Hosea 14. 1; Psalms 137. 9.

<sup>24</sup> See Deuteronomy 7. 13, 28. 4, 11, 17; also 2 Kings 4, 1; Isaiah 50. 1; Proverbs 19. 18; comp. Roman "Twelve Tablets": "If a father sells his son three times, let the son then go free of the father." See Payne, *ibid.*, 213, 215, 217, 246.

<sup>25</sup> See, however, Deuteronomy 21. 18 *ff.*

<sup>26</sup> Genesis 42. 37.

<sup>27</sup> Joshua 7. 25; 2 Samuel 21. 6, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Jeremiah 12. 1, 2; 31. 28-29; Ezekiel 14. 12 *ff.*; 18. ; 33. 12 *ff.*

<sup>29</sup> Sanhedrin 37a.

<sup>30</sup> See, for instance, Ohaloth 7. 6.

<sup>31</sup> G. H. Payne, *ibid.*, 270.

<sup>32</sup> Makhshirim, 2. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Payne, *ibid.*, 13.

<sup>34</sup> "Legacy of Greece," 329-345; Freeman, *op. cit.*; John Adams, Encyc. for Relig. and Ethics, article "Greek Education"; but see C. Delisle Burns, "Greek Schools," 80, and Van Hook, "Greek Life and Thought," 83-87.

<sup>35</sup> Klausner, "Historiya," vol. 2, p. 187.

<sup>36</sup> Nedarim 38a.

<sup>37</sup> Pesahim 68b.

<sup>38</sup> Aboth 2. 14.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3. 18.

## CHAPTER XX

<sup>1</sup> The wounds his son would receive as a result of his evil ways.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Sira 30. 1-13.

<sup>3</sup> Lamentations 3. 27.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Samuel 3. 13; 1 Kings 1. 6.

<sup>5</sup> See Genesis 31. 35; Exodus 20. 12; Leviticus 19. 3; Malachi 1. 6.

<sup>6</sup> A favourite figure with Isaiah: 1. 2, 3; 30. 1; also Jeremiah 4. 22; Deuteronomy 21. 18 *ff.*

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 8. 5; 2 Samuel 7. 14; Proverbs 13. 24; 17. 10; 22. 15; 23. 13, 14; 29. 15, 19; 27. 22. With regard to this latter, Toy makes an unconvincing distinction between "moral" and "intellectual" folly.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Wilkins' "Roman Education."

<sup>9</sup> See on this an interesting passage in J. B. Watson's "Behaviourism," p. 41.

<sup>10</sup> Sotah 47a; Sanhedrin 107b.

<sup>11</sup> Kiddushin 80, and in numerous places in the Talmud.

<sup>12</sup> Sabbath 152b.

<sup>13</sup> 1 Samuel 2. 19.

<sup>14</sup> Kelim, chap. 14, 26; Zebahim 88b; Yerushalmi, Sanhedrin 10. 1; Yoma 78b.

<sup>15</sup> Midrash, "Shoher Tov."

<sup>16</sup> Sabbath 58b.

<sup>17</sup> Gittin 57.

<sup>18</sup> Kelim, chap. 26; Bekhoroth 35a; Taanith (Yer.) 3. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Bekhoroth 30a; Baba Mezi'a 60a; Kethuboth 17a.

<sup>20</sup> Midrash on Proverbs.

<sup>21</sup> Sabbath 105b.

<sup>22</sup> Berakhoth 32a; Hulin 84.

<sup>23</sup> Semahoth, chap. 2. 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Hulin 94a.

<sup>26</sup> Kiddushin 31a; Makkoth 8a; and elsewhere; Moed Qatan 17a.

<sup>27</sup> Sanhedrin 70b; Nedarim 31a.

<sup>28</sup> Kiddushin, *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Kethuboth 51a; Makkoth 8a.

<sup>30</sup> William M. Cooper, "A History of the Rod."

<sup>31</sup> Kiddushin 31.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER XXI

<sup>1</sup> Hagigah 6a.

<sup>2</sup> Erubin 46b, 71b, 80b.

<sup>3</sup> Hagigah 3a; Sopherim 18. 5, 6.

<sup>4</sup> Sabbath 58b.

<sup>5</sup> See Megillah 27b; also Sabbath 118a.

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the story about "Joseph who honoured the Sabbath," Sabbath 119a.

<sup>7</sup> Rosh Hashanah 33a, 32b. Even on the Sabbath children would be allowed to practise it.

<sup>8</sup> The earliest age for fasting mentioned in the Talmud was eight (Yoma 82a). But it is not unreasonable to suggest that children then, as now, would attempt to imitate their elders before that age.

<sup>9</sup> Sukkah 45a.

<sup>10</sup> Pesachim 116a.

<sup>11</sup> Berakhoth 17a.

<sup>12</sup> Megillah 24a.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 28b.

<sup>14</sup> B. Bathra 12b. Of a curious "prophecy" of a little girl, see on same page.

<sup>15</sup> See Hulin 95b, the story of R. Yohanan, whose habit it was apparently to decide actions in this manner. For other interesting incidents in connection with this practice, see Gittin 58a, the story of R. Joshua; Hagigah 15a and b, story of Elisha b. Abuiah; Gittin 68a, story of R. Shesheth.

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